

The Chameleon

James Weber
Linn



1st Edn & Q.P. $\frac{dp}{75}$

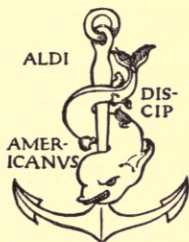
THE CHAMELEON

THE CHAMELEON

By

James Weber Linn

Author of *The Second Generation*



NEW YORK

McCLURE, PHILLIPS & Co.

1903

COPYRIGHT, 1903, BY
McCLURE, PHILLIPS & CO.

Published, February, 1903, R

To my two friends, with whom
I have so often swapped aspirations,

Dott Flint,
Joseph Marshall Flint,

I dedicate this book

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BRADFORD	3
II. BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER	26
III. A LITTLE SINGING	44
IV. AFTER THE WRECK	63
V. SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS	78
VI. THE PRESIDENT AND AMY	96
VII. ENTER CLARGES	120
VIII. THE RULES OF THE GAME	146
IX. TEN MILLION AND A GIRL	168
X. PILGRIMS IN BROWN	192
XI. TROUBLE COMES TO SHEDSY	213
XII. AMY IS WARNED	223
XIII. A GIRL AND TEN MILLION	234
XIV. THE AWAKENING OF AMY	254

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XV. MARRIAGE	274
XVI. ———AND AFTER	296
XVII. DRIFTING	314
XVIII. MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT	328
XIX. THE INEVITABLE	358
XX. THE RECTOR SPEAKS	382
XXI. THE ROAD OUT	406

THE CHAMELEON

Chapter One

BRADFORD

Though there were a good many passengers on the Pullman, Francis Bradford had mentally labelled them all uninteresting. At first, two young fellows, travelling with a mandolin-case and five hand-satchels, had attracted him for a moment. Their rough and knowingly shapeless garments rendered superfluous the information conveyed by the labels, "Hotel Cecil, London," "King's Arms, Cambridge," and the rest so artfully disposed upon the suit-case of one. Surely they were college men. Bradford watched them because he could not decide whether they were of Harvard or Yale; but later, as he passed their section, he glimpsed the hose one of them wore, and knew immediately that both his guesses had been wild; the boys were from Princeton. He saw, too, another label, informing the world that the owner of that suit-case was a member of some freshman team; but that, too, was

THE CHAMELEON

redundant information to such as perceived the striped hose. When he had catalogued the two, so to speak, Bradford lost interest in the Princetonians, save as he reflected cynically on the unparalleled haughtiness of red-cheeked youth which has nothing to boast of except that it goes to college and possesses fathers who have sold a million hogs, or ten million packages of tobacco, or a hundred million tenpenny nails, as the case may be. In his leisurely survey of the car Bradford also passed over the woman with the freckled little girl, praying only that the child would not become troublesome. Opposite the small potentiality of discomfort sat an old woman in a black gown, ornamented by fringes of tubular jet beads. The small child was attracted to these beads, and was at length allowed to pass them through her fingers, an occupation which seemed to fulfil her highest dreams of enjoyment. Bradford was well aware that the owner of the beads permitted this liberty as a substitute for a more formal introduction; and presently, as he expected, the freckled little girl's mother was drawn into conversation. While they discussed the obvious stupidity, futility, and igno-

BRADFORD

bility of physicians, pointing out with a responsive alternation cases in which they had known the doctors to fail of success or to be over-greedy for operation, Bradford listened with a superior amusement; but as they launched upon the tamer if wider waters of infantile ailments, he lost interest once more, and yawned out of the window.

Very little rewarded his gaze there, either. Possibly an eye keen for scenic distinctions might, even from a flying express on a wobbly and underbalanced railway, note the points which individualize a landscape and differentiate the smoothness of Ohio from the flatness of Illinois, the dulness of Indiana from the monotony of Iowa; but Bradford's eye, quick as it was for humanity, closed to snoring slumber upon Nature alone. Away and away folded the low ridges, green with grass, brown with stubble, or yellowed with the heavy oats; over and over recurred the white farmhouse, the red barns, the gaunt old windmill like a grimly protecting skeleton towering above all—that remarkable group which typifies, in its endless reappearance, throughout the whole Middle West, the monotonous comfort and prosperous dulness of the “bulwark of

THE CHAMELEON

the American nation," the well-to-do farmer. Neither the bulwark nor his environs amused Bradford, who was quite ready to turn back to the car when he heard the rustle of a gown along the aisle. A girl was passing.

It is as easy for us to say we like this and hate that as it is difficult to give any adequate reason. In this truth, no doubt, lies the financial salvation of the critics of all kinds, for we read their works to find out why we think as we do. Bradford, of course, could not whirl round like a top; therefore he saw, not the girl's face, but only her hair and the strong, young outline of her figure, and the gray travelling-gown she was wearing; yet, though the combination was nothing unique or new to him, he was sure at once that he liked it immensely. She went on out of the car, which disappointed him a good deal, until he reflected that he would see her in the dining-car in a few minutes. He went thither among the first, and dallied over his cinderspeckled dainties (which he conceived of as representing geological epochs, from the Pliocene candeloupe to the coffee of the glacial period), until the waiter despaired of two tips from his seat, and

BRADFORD

could only hope the one would be a large one; but still she did not come in, and Bradford had to go out without seeing her again, a circumstance which annoyed him so much he almost forgot to tip the waiter at all. He walked very slowly back through the aisle, as, indeed, the swaying train made it imperative for him to do, looking carefully about in his eagerness to see whether or not her face really matched the ideal he had composed of her, but still she evaded him in some way. He knew that they had stopped a short time before, but the town had been merely a speck, a water-tank town, a town printed in small letters on the largest maps, and to Bradford it was inconceivable that a girl with such a carriage and such a gown could be willing even to hesitate there. He felt irritated, and even a little defrauded.

Some time later in the evening, keeping his balance with difficulty as the car increasingly rocked, he went forward into the smoking-compartment. It was then about nine o'clock, and the train was due to reach Carfax in twelve hours more; nine in the morning, unless one of the not infrequent delays of the C. & A. occurred, would see them in the old city

THE CHAMELEON

where he expected to live. He had a letter to read—a letter about which he had been speculating for a good many years; a letter which was likely to prove deeply personal, and from a woman whose opinion, when she was alive, he cared more about than any other person's in the world—from his mother. To-night, on this rattling, slinging train, among total strangers, was the time appointed for its perusal—"the night," as she said, "before he began the practice of his profession." He found three men sitting talking in the smoking-compartment, and, as he had gone there especially to be alone, he decided to wait until they went away. He was going to receive a message from a past which his life could never duplicate, and he wished to receive it by himself. Although the delay made him frown a little, he was not unready to endure it; partly because he wanted instinctively to put his letter off till the last possible moment, as he liked to put off most things which threatened to be at all disagreeable. He was keenly curious, but he had an uncomfortable sensation that possibly his mother's message might be severe. She had been an odd woman, his little mother.

BRADFORD

Moreover, he was not disinclined to listen to one of these three men—a man, whose strong, smiling, plebeian face he had half-recognized in the dining-car an hour or two before. After a while he had said to his waiter, “Who is that big man with the spotted vest, Charley? Do you know his name?” “That genel’mán, seh?” replied the waiter, adjusting the spoons that he might lower his tone to the confidential, “yes, seh; that’s Misteh Murdoch, seh, the pickle-makeh.” Bradford had known at once whence his vague half-recognition sprang from; he had recollected at once those lithographed billboards wherefrom that same strong, smiling, plebeian face, pictured in three colors, greeted the public of every city in the United States every day. Bradford had seen those lithographs in New York from the windows of the cab which took him from the steamboat pier; he had paced the depot platform in Philadelphia, and beheld through a vista of iron arches a street at the end decorated by the same design; in Carfax, the actual home of “Misteh Murdoch, the pickle-makeh,” no doubt but they would be legion. Now in the smoker he noted once more, with an amused

THE CHAMELEON

flick of his eyelids, the wide expanse of Murdoch's dark-green, crimson-spotted waistcoat, so wide and so crimson that it reminded him irresistibly of the fields of poppies he had just left in France. Just because Murdoch was so huge a man the other details of his appearance were noticeable, too. He was tall, and he was bulky; still, he was not paunchy; if the line from his shoulder to his hips did not angle in, at least it was perpendicular. The short neck promised a big head, and there it was, big as Daniel Webster's. Altogether, Murdoch completely filled the eye of a casual observer, though Bradford knew well enough that an artist's glance would never hesitate on such a comfortably common figure. The man, like his lithographs, had been done in the primary colors.

"We are told," said one of the other men, who was staring aimlessly into the darkness, pressing against the window, "that as soon as we have reached a land where the ground is flat and the people are not, we may know we have come to the West? Is that your opinion, sir?"

The pickle-maker laughed. "Well, not altogether," he said. "We've got *some* hills, and

BRADFORD

some fools—even in the West. But I reckon they've both got New England ancestry, maybe." He laughed again, joyfully. He had a rich slowness of speech which could not be called a drawl because he clipped off the ends of his words so sharply.

"The door-yard of the universe," said the other man, meditatively, still gazing out of the window. "Good name for this section. When I make the transcontinental jump, I feel as if I was in the door-yard until I pass Omaha."

"And yet Omaha is a long way from Boston, too—eh, professor?"

The window-gazer turned lazily about. He was smoking a cigarette. He wore a dark beard, cut to a point, and possessed the thin cheeks and large nose which suggest cynicism.

"So I am to be classed as a professor?"

Murdoch nodded imperturbably. The third man winked at Bradford.

"Of what, sir? You know there are professors and professors, now. Am I a professor of prestidigitation, of saltation, or of the genus *ton-sorialæ*?"

THE CHAMELEON

“About that,” remarked the pickle-maker, cautiously, “I wouldn’t undertake to say. But I’ll bet you that I can tell one kind of a professor that you’re not, and that is——”

“Well?”

“What the old ladies call a professor of religion.”

The man who had winked now slapped his leg. “He’s got you sized, Bates,” he declared. “He certainly has you under glass.” He knocked the ashes of his cigar to the carpet, and scattered them neatly with his toe.

“Did you say you were bound for California?” asked Murdoch. The man addressed as Bates nodded.

“How do you like California?”

He meditated without apparent enthusiasm. “So-so. I’ve been there only once. When I compared it to Boston I seemed to find some advantages, and then some disadvantages. Did you ever hear the story of the sinner who was being urged to reform, after a beautiful purple life? They gave him the hot hereafter pretty straight, and when they finished he hesitated; then he said,

BRADFORD

‘ Well, parson, though heaven’s got the climate, after all, you know, hell’s got the company.’ ”

“ I’d hate to tell that story either in Boston *or* in California,” said the third man.

“ I’d hate to tell it in Boston, anyhow,” assented Murdoch, recovering from his laughter. “ But now you let me tell you, gentlemen ”—he leaned forward and tapped the professorial knee with a ponderous but prepossessing forefinger—“ you let me tell you that the State of California is destined to become the State of the Union; *the* State of the Union—or pretty near. You take those orange groves and lemon groves, and solid miles and miles of walnuts, and grapes—counties full of grapes, ‘ tangling themselves in their own rich tendrils,’ as the poet says—and then do you think you’ve got it all? You take their gold mines and their silver mines and their jewel mines—their mountains of hematite, and mountains of copper, and mountains of the Lord knows what that’s valuable——”

“ Mountains of brass,” murmured Bates.

“ Eh? I didn’t catch it. Well, *then* do you think you’ve got it all? You take their wheat like the Dakotas, and their barley like Ohio, and their

THE CHAMELEON

oats like Iowa, and then do you think you've got it all? You take their fisheries, and their factories, and then do you think you've got it all? No, sir!"

"When may we expect to get it all?" politely inquired he of the whiskers.

"When you go north!" replied the pickle-maker, unexpectedly. "When you go north, up among the mountains, where the trees grow; where the trees grow that are unequalled anywhere now—the pines, the straightest-backed, cleanest-hearted, honestest trees anywhere on God's green earth to-day."

"California man, I presume?" suggested Bates. But Murdoch shook his head.

"No. I belong here in Carfax. It's just the thought of those pines that sets me off. I believe a man who would cut one of those pines unnecessarily would kill his mother; I really do." The pickle-maker's eyes glowed with enthusiasm.

"What a set of potential matricides there must be in this country, on that showing!"

"You're down on the lumbermen, hey?"

"Well, no, I'm not; I'm not at all," answered

B R A D F O R D

Murdoch. "If we've got to have the timber, why, somebody's got to cut it. But I'm glad I don't have to. I'll tell you something. Up here in the north a ways I've got a house cost me ten thousand to put up; right spang in the heart of a grove of pines—little fellows enough, compared to those California giants—but anyway, I only cut down four trees to make room for that house; I dodged the rest, and saved every one of 'em. Now, what do you think of that?"

"Stone house?"

"No; it's wood." He caught his questioner's eye, and laughed. "But, as I say, the sin ain't on my conscience, and if I'd cut any more of my pines than I had to it would have been."

Presently, after some desultory conversation, the professor, if such he were, and his friend rose to go to bed, only to be dropped back upon their seats as the train shot round a curve.

"It's early, gentlemen."

"It will be late enough before I get to sleep," answered Bates. "Morpheus never travels on the Carfax and Albans Railroad, I have observed."

"I go by it for the exercise I get," said his

THE CHAMELEON

friend, clutching at the wall. "I find it keeps down my fat. Good-night, boys."

Bradford had taken no part in the conversation; and now that they were left alone the big man sprawled his big body silently over the seat, while Bradford watched him unobserved. He seemed not more than forty years of age. His face, though it was full and smooth, was not mottled by high living, and the heavy lips under his dark mustache were cleanly cut. At some inward flash of reminiscence they curved into a smile, and then the large brown eyes, as steady and honest as a St. Bernard's, carried so agreeable a light that Bradford smiled in turn. Suddenly the big man looked down, and saw him.

"Well, young man," he said, abruptly, "life going pretty well, eh?"

"Pretty well, Mr. Murdoch," replied Bradford, amiably. He pronounced the man's name in the expectation that it would surprise him a trifle; Bradford liked to do the slightly unexpected. He was not disappointed. Murdoch looked at him with a sharper interest.

"You know me, do you?"

BRADFORD

“Homo Americanus sum,” observed Bradford.

“What say?”

Bradford risked an impertinence. “Well, sir, I can read.”

“Read?”

“The billboards.”

Murdoch broke into his deep laughter. “Ho! ho!” he chuckled. “So you see the billboards, eh? Knew me from the pictures, eh? You ain’t the first, young man, nor you won’t be the last. Who’s the best-known woman in the United States to-day? Who’s the woman, if she was to step out on a railroad platform, every man, woman, and child within sight would recognize her? The President’s wife? Not she. I’ll tell you who—it’s Lydia Pinkham. Lydia leads; the rest nowhere. That’s advertising. Well, do you know what I set out to do, when I had those pictures of me printed? I said to myself, I’m going to be as well known as Lydia Pinkham! And the time’s coming on—eh?”

“I believe you, Mr. Murdoch.”

“I went to a dozen photographers, gave ’em each a dozen poses, and then picked out the one

THE CHAMELEON

nearest like me, and had it printed—horns, hoofs, and all. I don't wonder you knew me. I wonder more people don't."

"I didn't see the lithographs in Europe?"

"You will next year. They haven't been out very long. You just back from Europe?"

"Just back."

"Well, I've never been over. That might surprise you somewhat? I know all the corners of America, but Europe I haven't got round to, yet. I've been cultivating nature so much I've rather crowded out art, so far. But it's a grief to me—a real grief."

"Ah?"

"Yes," said Murdoch, comfortably, "I want to get across and see all those countries—Italy, you know, and France, and all the rest—Spain, and what not. America is a wonderful nation—the most wonderful, of course; but they do have certain matters we haven't got, and sha'n't have for a while yet. Art, I was just speaking of—painting, you understand, and sculpture, and architecture. We're moving on; but—speaking in an artistic sense—we haven't arrived yet."

BRADFORD

“You are an adherent of art, sir?”

“I? Every time. You know my business, of course, if you’ve seen my pictures. I make pickles—just pickles. All kinds of pickles—big and little, chowchow, relishes, dill, watermelon, chutney, everything. You wouldn’t suppose that gave a man much opportunity to do art a friendly turn, would you? I didn’t think so, either, for a long time; and the fact is, till I got on my feet, I wasn’t so much anxious to help art as to help myself.” He chuckled again. “But one day, a while ago, a man came to me, and he had a suggestion. He proposed that he should pick me out a little bit from Shakespeare to illustrate each sort of pickle; we’d have it printed on the cans, underneath a picture of his house at Stratford, and call the whole thing the Shakespeare Brand. I saw at once what a scheme it was, and gave him *carte blanche* to find the mottoes, which he did. Now we have one from King Henry V. on the baked beans—‘I eat and eat, I swear’—that one I always laughed at.” He laughed now. “Then there is ‘Manna in the way of starvèd people,’ that’s from the Merchant of Venice; it’s on the water-

THE CHAMELEON

melon pickles. And we have 'The strength of twenty men' on the mustard—Romeo and Juliet, that is. You wouldn't think a scrap of poetry like that would do any good, eh? And yet I've had letters from all over the country—all over the country—commending that idea, and thanking me for it."

"And the Shakespeare brand sells?"

"Sells very well. But that isn't all. I try to make my advertising artistic, too. There's a field for art in advertising, eh? At least a man can keep all that's coarse and vulgar out of it, can't he? I tell you, I'm friendly to art—do you know why?" He moved a little closer. "To my mind, there are places and people and sounds in America that are grander and deeper and sweeter than anywhere else in the world. It isn't only in keenness and sharpness that America leads; we've got higher possibilities over here, in all ways. Only, we've found out how to express our keenness and sharpness, through trade and commerce, do you see? All the rest is here, too, but we can't express it yet. Say, young man, have you ever seen those mountain meadows in Colorado—green as sea-

BRADFORD

water, and springing right from among them snow-white cliffs hundreds and thousands of feet high? Have you ever seen the deserts in the southwest — so big and raw and terrifying I never see 'em without thinking of the earth as God made it and before he turned the water on? Have you ever stood among those pines I was just talking of, and watched 'em till you felt yourself getting smaller and smaller, and honester and honester, till finally there was no more of you, seemed like, than a pin-head, but it was clean stuff all through, anyway? I have. And I've thought—well, I guess there's nothing like this anywhere else but in America; and it won't be long till the man comes along with his brush or his piano or his pen who can set it all down in paint and paper and music, so that there won't be anything in art like that, either. And when he comes America will lead the world in all ways, as she ought to, and John Murdoch is going to do all he can to bring it about. Well—that's why I'm friendly to art." His big brown eyes kindled, and he spoke with the eagerness and confidence of a child.

"I am sure you are," consented Bradford. He

THE CHAMELEON

perceived, without a too open smile, the pickle-maker's eagerness, and his colossal ignorance of the artistic problem which confronted America. He wondered what Murdoch would say if someone should tap him on the shoulder, and tell him, "My dear fellow, you and your cursed lithographs you are so proud of—you, and the kind of men you represent—are doing more to lower the standards of America in art and literature than even the daily newspapers are. You might publish fifty thousand dietetic epigrams from Shakespeare, and if the great bard learns of it he will only turn in his grave. You are prostituting art, Mr. Murdoch; you have turned the poor lady to harlotry, and she is dying by inches, like other harlots." Bradford himself was conscious of a strong desire to make these or similar observations, not because he resented this utilization of Shakespeare, but because it would be amusing, to say the least. But he restrained himself.

"Going far?" asked Murdoch.

"No. I'm going to live in Carfax."

"So? Do you know the place?"

"Oh, yes; I went to college there."

BRADFORD

“I was an eighty-blank man.”

“At Carfax? I know, sir.” Bradford nodded.

“I was only ten years after you, sir.”

“Going into business?”

“In a way. The lamb and the law are to try lying together, I believe.” The whim seized him, and he pulled out his card-case, extracting one of his new cards. The pickle-maker glanced at it.

“Well, I’m glad to meet you, Mr. Bradford, especially as we’re both Carfax men. I won’t say I’ve heard of you before, though I’ve no doubt if I’d had more time to get down to the old college when you were there I should have done so. But I’m sure I’ll hear of you again.”

“I hope so.”

“Of course, since you were to be a lawyer you naturally went to college,” went on Murdoch.

“But what I wish is, that I could fix it so every young man worth his salt would go, whether he wants to be a minister or a manufacturer. Now you take me. College needed four years, right out of the best part of my life. I never intended to be a professor, or a learned man of any sort—just a business man. I mowed lawns and tended fur-

THE CHAMELEON

naces to get through. Suppose I had spent those four years in business? Maybe I should have succeeded sooner. I can't tell; but anyway, I'd have lost something that I wouldn't sell now, any more than I'd sell my word, and that is, the consciousness of being educated!"

"It is a great privilege," assented Bradford.

"You'll never know how great until you reach my age. Fourteen years I've been working since then, and I've made Carfax what she should have been long before—the centre of the pickle business in the United States. But I want to tell you one thing: the opportunities ain't all gone. Any other young man, if he's got energy, and believes that when you see a chance then is the time to take it, and when you don't see it then is the time to make it, can succeed just as well as I have. They'll tell you the law is overcrowded, for instance. Shucks! You ask a man digging a sewer what he thinks about the trade, and ten to one he'll tell you there are too many sewer-diggers. All professions are overcrowded; the world's overcrowded, unless you get in and shove. What do you suppose God gave you elbows for? You remember one thing—his

BRADFORD

profession don't make or break the man; it's the men who make or break a profession."

The reeling car swung him forcibly against the window, and he swore a little. "Next time I'll put my elbow through it," he said. He looked at his watch. "Well, I'll say good-night, Mr. Bradford. I must go forward and look after my women folks. You say you live in Carfax? Like to have you call round at the factory some time; it's really worth going over."

"Bradford," murmured the owner of that name gently. Then, at last, he was left alone with his letter.

Chapter Two

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

He sat some time with the letter in his hand, hesitating. The superscription told him that now was the time to open it. "To my son. To be opened on the day before he begins the practice of his profession." That was the curious way in which the address ran—curiously reminiscent, in its quaint particularity, of the mother who had died five years before. He was at college then. They sent for him to come home, and on the journey he counted the minutes one by one—so many, so many, so very many, the long night, the endless day!—and, at last, in the long afternoon, he had reached the little prairie city in which she lived. The minister met him at the door. That of all men it must be that minister, with his subdued, come-let-us-be-cheerful-at-all-hazards air, and the dull snuffle in his voice! Bradford took his offered

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

hand mechanically, conscious in his preoccupation that the sleeve had a speck of egg on the end of it. "My mother?" he asked, breathlessly, taken out of himself at the moment. "My boy," the minister had said, "this is a vain world, a world of shadows——" "My mother?" Bradford had interrupted intensely. "Sorrow comes to us all," went on the minister, monotonously, "and we must bear it with what fortitude we——" "Curse you and your fortitude!" broke in Bradford. His voice was wavering, thrilling; the suspense was tearing the heart out of him, yet he knew it was not suspense, either, but certainty that lay concealed behind the man's even, dull consolation. Bradford had not eaten since the afternoon before. "Is my mother dead?" The shocked minister nodded feebly; Bradford's hands dropped at his side.

He recalled his thoughts with a start, and smiled cynically. It had not really happened so. His entrance to the house had borne no such touch of fervor. The minister had told him simply and at once. Yet Bradford had loved his mother, and so to find her dead, cut off from him forever, to speak

THE CHAMELEON

to him no more, to kiss him no more, to love him no more—such a homecoming he could not forget. It had been dull in the event, but the latent possibility of drama was there. Bradford had merely imagined what might have been.

“To be opened on the day before he begins the practice of his profession.” They had always known that he was to be a lawyer. After she went away he had continued in the idea; finished his college course, finished his law course, taken his year abroad, and now was come back, to enter upon the practice of his profession. He did not contemplate the future with that sinking of the heart which besets so many young lawyers. Bradford professed disbelief in his own cleverness, but the chorus of voices about him which chanted it and called his attention to it had ended by fastening belief upon him unaware, and even against his judgment. He admitted to himself that he would probably succeed. He would not achieve the raw, huge, unworked success of such crude fellows as Murdoch, but he would get along. He intended to make his life a smaller, finer thing, cut and set as a jewel should be, and in proportion far

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

more valuable than the big ugly masses of clay and carbon which the world was always finding on hill-sides and triumphantly holding up for diamonds. Such a man as Murdoch was remarkable, no doubt, but how unfortunately rough! As Bradford remembered Murdoch's phrase about "the consciousness of being an educated man" he laughed quietly the laugh which he had courteously repressed before the man himself. The pickle-maker's ideas of art were Patagonian; yet he sublimely believed himself an educated man!

He recalled those tremendous lithographs, plastering the bare walls and the billboards which between them successfully hid any chance picturesque Carfax might otherwise have had. When Bradford had first seen the lithographed picture he had thought, as he had thought to-night at the sight of the man in the flesh, this Murdoch would be a good sort to clash a stein with. There was something taking in the width between the eyes, the solidity of the chin, and the upward twist at the corner of the mouth—a kind of aggressive good-humor and powerful joviality, which slaps you on the back with amazing heartiness, and is

THE CHAMELEON

not at all bad when found in certain wide spaces of life. But one would hardly care to live with such a man, Bradford thought, shudderingly, and began to imagine the family—Mrs. Murdoch, thin-chested, but bearing the honors of the pickle-making business with a querulous dignity; a woman to blush and cry, “Oh, husband!” when the cheerful John was *too* obscene in his humor, but a woman to boast, in every ring and thread of lace she wore, of the wealth which immensely to her surprise had come upon her. There would be children, and yet more children—Mrs. Murdoch would get her thin chest from the constant bearing of them; she would be always in an Empire gown. And these children would be what? The typical American brats, no doubt, loud-voiced, French in their impudence if their nurse were French, Irish if she were Irish, but rampantly impudent and American through either veneer, always ready to show off and to interrupt—as he himself had been, thought Bradford with a reminiscent shiver—and intrusive as young pigs. *Les Américains nouveaux riches*—grandfatherless!

With minute carefulness he clipped the end

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

from his letter, so that the thread of paper curled up and followed the knife-blade. His eyes followed the curl, but his thoughts were far back in the past again. After all, then, he remembered bitterly, he had reached home too late. When he saw her that day, his mother's eyes were shut upon him. Her last words had been for others. But when they gave him this letter he knew at least that her last thoughts had been of him. That was five, nearly six years ago now. It was strange, this word of his mother's coming to him, unheard by anyone else across the spaces of six years. This, which he was about to read, she had left him for a little piece of herself. What had she chosen to say to him—counsel, denunciation, revelation, or perhaps—praise?

“ You are going to begin your life to-morrow ; I am leaving mine behind me to-day. Francis, will it help you to know that you were a good son to me? ” If his mother should say that ! His heart was warm within him at the thought. *That* message would nerve a man for life, would it not ? Had he been a good son to her ? At least he felt that he had not been evil. He did not pray for

THE CHAMELEON

forgetfulness of what he had done; but then, there was the other half of the petition: had he left anything undone? The answer was not so ready this time. Yet he was sure that he had been, on the whole, a good son, and his heart leaped up when he remembered how he loved his mother. She had married so early in life that there were only twenty years between her and her son; yet her hair was snow-white when she died, and even earlier he could recall it in the firelight, when she used to sit in her chair with him at her knees, his head in her lap, while she stroked his head and told him stories of his father, who had died when Francis was quite a little boy. The light brought out the gentleness of her face as she talked. How he loved his mother! Surely she could not be about to scold him now! Slowly he took out the letter and began to read.

“My dearest, as I write you are far away from me, but when you read this you will be—how much farther! I am going to die. Just how soon I do not know, but I think very soon. We shall not often see each other again, I am afraid”—had they ever seen each other, Bradford wondered,

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

after she wrote that?—"and even if we should, I have something to tell you which I do not wish to tell you while I am alive. Just now it will do you no good, possibly even harm, and it would cause you suffering. Yet you ought some time to know. So I am writing this, which you will not see until I am gone, and you are ready to begin your work in life.

"You are going to be a lawyer, and I hope you will be, not necessarily a great one, but a good one. I know that the life is hard at first, but you will have it made easier for you than many have, easier indeed than your life is now while I am alive, for the two thousand dollars a year which I have remaining will of course go to you. I am glad, dearest, that you are not going to endure hardships, and yet I am not altogether sure sometimes that to escape hardships is wisest for any of us. If this money, which will come in so steadily without your troubling yourself about it, should make you less energetic, less ambitious, less eager in your pursuit of the very best that is to be got out of life, I should feel—no, I will say I shall feel, for I know that I shall be permitted to watch

THE CHAMELEON

you—I do not care how happy heaven may be, I shall feel unhappy; I shall feel sorry that you did not have actual necessity to force you forward. I am not afraid that you will do anything to make me unhappy, any more than you have ever done; but sometimes, dear, I am a little afraid that you will not care enough about doing something to make me glad.

“And now I must tell you what no one else knows, and not even you should know if it were not that I hope it may help you a little as well as pain you. I have begun to write you this many times, but I have always stopped when I came to this point, for it seems to me as if I could not go on, and yet as if I must. It is about your father.

“You did not know that your father was not a happy man. You were too young when he died to remember him well, and he was so careful before you and all the world not to show exactly what he thought that you would perhaps not have guessed at his unhappiness even if you had been older. But I knew it, of course. And I knew, too, what no one else on earth suspects—no one till you read this. Your father—I must tell you bluntly, or I

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

cannot tell you at all—he was not drowned by accident, as they have always thought. He killed himself, and he did it because he feared that he was going insane.

“I have told you very often how he and three of his friends went out in a little yacht on Lake Onondaga. The wind was strong, but nothing dangerous. As the boat turned the boom swung round, knocking your father overboard, as they all thought. They thought he must have been stunned. They did not see him come to the surface, and in any case none of them could swim. So they lost him. Later his body was found, and though it was thought surprising that there were no bruises on his forehead, they concluded that he must have been hurt in some fashion. No one ever hinted at suicide. He was popular and he was not poor, and he was thought to be very happy. Yes, they none of them dreamed of intention except me. I was as certain, when they brought me the news of his death, that he had killed himself—as certain as I was next morning, when I had the letter he himself had posted before he left the shore.

“His planning of it was deliberate and very like

THE CHAMELEON

him. He had been very careful for us—you and me—and for all his relations; he had taken every precaution which would make death certain and yet apparently quite accidental. When he organized the party he asked only men whom he knew could not swim. He gave one of them the tiller, took the position he had planned to take, and waited, and when the minute came he went to his death as quietly as if he had been going to sleep. But, for all his care, he wanted me to know—nobody else but me. Till now no one else has ever known. When the mail brought me the letter in the morning I was so sure, even before I opened it, what he had written, that I might have burned it without reading it, and still I should have known all I know now. I knew your father, dear, you see.

“Do you wonder, Francis, why I am telling this to you now? So much as I have already written you had a right to know. This much, after all, I never hesitated to tell you. It is what remains to tell that hurts me so. But I have prayed—how I have prayed!—and I seem to be doing right. I know that it is hard enough to do.

“I have been Mrs. Bradford so long now, and

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

since your father died I have grown so close to him, that it is hard for me to realize that once I meant to leave him. But it is true. I was not happy with him; I do not think that any woman could have been happy with him. Dear, if you think my unhappiness was all my own fault, you will hurt me very much. I know that in many little things I was quite, quite wrong, but I always loved your father very much, even when I meant to leave him. And I did not nag him. I was tactful. No, I cannot reproach myself. He was not happy, but he made his own unhappiness, and some day he will tell you so, too.

“ I find it very difficult to explain to you why he made us both unhappy, and yet I must, for to tell you this, and to warn you, is my only reason for writing to you now. For sometimes, as you have grown older, I have feared, good as you are to me, that you might inherit a little of your father’s weakness; and then I have thought that at any cost when you were old enough I would tell you what that weakness was.

“ You know that your father was not very successful in the businesses he undertook, and that

THE CHAMELEON

finally he retired from them all and lived upon the rest of the money which he had inherited, joined to mine. It was not a very great deal at the beginning, but of course it became smaller and smaller, until when your father died they found only enough to settle this two thousand dollars a year upon us. It was rather a surprise to the world, but it has been enough for us, and it will be enough for you till you are able to earn more. Your father's lack of success did not come from indolence, and I haven't any fear of indolence in you. One of the delusions which beset him was the fear that he was a coward, but that was not true, either. Many times, it is true, he shirked doing what he might have done, and many times—oh, so many times that toward the end of his life he was hardly able to do otherwise, he did one of the most cowardly things in the world—he told what was not the truth. Yet it was not cowardly, exactly, as he did it. But it was the knowledge that he was doing it which terrified him and hounded him, until at last he felt that he could stand it no longer, and he went away.

“There were two things that never let him rest.

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

He always wondered what people were thinking about him, and he always hoped they were praising him. They are little things, and in many people they may honestly do good, but they were so developed in your father that they did him great harm. He could not do the simplest thing in any company, but especially in the company of strangers, without being fully conscious of their attitude toward him; and in great things he was just as conscious. When he asked me to marry him we were at a dance; we were sitting out, and there was some girl near us whom neither of us knew. Your father told me long afterward, one day when he was in one of his self-reproachful moods, that at the time he was asking me he was wondering whether that girl guessed what he was talking of, from the expression in his eyes, and he smiled to deceive her, though he wished at the same time that she could hear him. The story may have been true, or he may just have been seeking some striking way of expressing his detestation of his own insincerity. I cannot tell. But of course it was this insincerity which made us both unhappy. When one is really insincere, what is there

THE CHAMELEON

left in life? I do not mean that your father was either hypocritical or malicious. He was always gentle-natured. But he was never real. He did what seemed to him dramatically right to do, and his intuition was so true and fine that nearly everyone approved of everything he did. I think that he might have made a great actor. Some men, he used to tell me, saw through the veil he hung up, but no woman ever did except myself, and he said that was because almost all women were afflicted with the same fault. It may be so, but I do not think so.

“ Well, dear, in the end he tired of everything, you see. Of course one tires of everything, of every emotion, unless it is real. If it is not a part of him, if he can stand on one side and look at it and estimate it, he must tire of it some time. And nothing was ever real with your father. Nothing ever came so close to him that he could not watch it and balance the meaning of it. Once, a little while after you were born, I was very ill. Your father was very sorry for me, but I saw that he was thinking, too, how he ought to act and what he ought to do. He did the right things always,

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

but not because he could not help it, only because he saw they were the right things to do. I began to wonder and watch then. It was a great pity that I ever guessed. If I could have been kept from seeing we might have turned our lives very differently. Yet I am not sure. The worst is, I am not sure of anything about him. I am not sure that he loved me. I am not even sure that, with all his careful planning, he wanted to die. He must have been really in earnest—he must have been, he must have been! He couldn't have thought of anything then, except that we were estranged, and life meant nothing more to him. Yet if he did not care for anything but death, why did he write me at the last? Why did he not leave me to think it was accident? I should not have thought so, but I should have been able to hope so. It is terrible to write so. I do it only that you may see how much I care about what I am going to tell you now.

“Oh, my dear, my dear, be honest with yourself! Don't speak, or act, or think for any effect upon anyone else! If you sacrifice your reputation, if you sacrifice a friendship, still keep true to

THE CHAMELEON

yourself. Dear boy, is it foolish to tell you this? I know that it is needless; I know that you will be genuine and sincere. This is only my heart's cry to let you know what my sorrow would be if you were not. For I love you, dear. Aimee Curtis Bradford."

He shuffled the sheets together mechanically and replaced them in the envelope. "To my son. To be opened on the evening before he enters upon the practice of his profession." The handwriting, with its firm, fine delicacy, was very like the little mother, whose eyes especially he remembered—eyes which looked so clearly out upon the world. This, then, was why she had been so uncompromising with the people about them—and with him. This was the source of her reputation for severity and hardness. She insisted upon exact justice at any cost. She had shut herself away from him for three days once when he told her a little lie. He had repeated an experience of his in school, and a clever thing he had said. There had really been a foundation for his story, only he had misstated a little to make it sound better. He winced still at the scorn in her eyes when she found him out.

BRADFORD READS HIS LETTER

“It takes courage to lie boldly,” she said; “but any coward can twist the truth a little.” How often he had thought of that since then! And this was her reason. His eyes dewed over as he remembered her, and he dashed his hand across them. “At least one thing about me was genuine—my love for her,” he thought, proudly. “Anyone could see that.”

As he looked at his watch it was five minutes to one, and he rose, meaning to think the letter over in his berth. There was a sudden upbending of the seat on which he sat. “Something wrong!” flashed through his mind, so quickly that it preceded the grinding roar, the smashing, tossing lurches, the rapid dislocating series of jolts, which told him what the trouble was. He was shaken to the floor, and dug his nails into it. The cover of the ice-water stand struck him and bruised his face. The lights, which had hitherto endured, now shot suddenly out. There was a crash, and a choking stream of cold water deluged him as the stand followed the cover. Then, by a final twist and heave, Bradford was thrown violently against the side opposite to the window, lay an instant conscious of stillness, fell and fell endlessly into oblivion.

Chapter Three

A LITTLE SINGING

The instant that he recovered knowledge and scrambled to his feet every square inch of his body seemed alive with nerves sharply acute, so that he could feel and hear and even smell more keenly than ever before. The car, though it was at rest, quivered under him; a very faint shrill snarl of steam pierced to his ear-drums, and he knew that somewhere the pipes were twisted off. He fancied the pungent odor of it in his nostrils. A quick vision of flame bursting out past him, of red tongues flicking closer and closer, swam so vividly before his eyes that he shut them involuntarily in the darkness. A scream—the first human sound he had heard—from somewhere in the car drove them open with a wedge, and spurred every fibre of him to escape. The flames were not in the compartment, as he saw, looking fearfully around, yet it

A LITTLE SINGING

was not so black as he had remembered it. He looked up. The car was so turned that the window slanted toward the sky, and there, round as the bull's-eye of a target, the moon was shining in at him. He tried the door, but the wrenching had jammed it in some way, so that it would not open. He lifted the broken water-cooler, and with all his strength slammed it against the window, so that both panes broke outward and fell with a clatter, leaving ragged edges of heavy glass all around. Bradford hammered feverishly at them with his clumsy tool until most of them were beaten away. Then he sprang and clutched the lower side and drew himself up. Slivers of glass remaining slashed his hands, tore his clothes, caught at him everywhere, but he paid no attention to them. The inward vision of those flying flames was hurrying him forward as automatically as a machine. It was easy for him, out of training though he was, to pull his slim body through the opening, to jerk his long legs after him, to slide down the steep angle of the car. He lighted upon his feet, and the danger for him was over.

This is what he saw. On one side of him,

THE CHAMELEON

dropping away, sloped a gully bank, at an angle of forty-five degrees, to a little stream choked with bushes, where the water gurgled in the moonlight, and shot distorted images of her silvery roundness back to him. Beyond the creek rose another bank, but not bare and gravelly, as this was; all dark and gloomy, rather, with underbrush and trees. Because Bradford had landed facing all this he saw it—peaceful and lonely and quite unterrifying. Then he turned. The wheels of the Pullman stuck out helplessly before him. Farther forward another car also lay upon its side, nose pointed downward. They were pathetically like struggling animals which had fallen and could not rise again. Still farther on, at the foot of the slope, the stream was crammed with *débris*—piled, box-like masses of wood and iron, here huddled shapelessly, and there flinging out a gesticulatory timber or an iron rod, silhouetted insanely against the pale gray of the sky. Every detail was tossed to him with a relentless clearness. And, as he looked, the terrible loneliness of mystery and fear enthralled him. Not a human being was in his sight. He guessed that he had fainted, but he had no way of

A LITTLE SINGING

telling for how long; it seemed to him wholly possible that it might have been for hours, and again the visions assailed him—visions of all the men and women he had passed among and listened to and wondered over, so short a while ago, now all lying crumpled and dead in this heap of ruins. He sweated so that his eyes filled, and he pulled his sleeve across them to clear them. When he looked again the wreck was alive with people, bleeding and crying and crawling toward him.

But it was only one man. As he came closer Bradford saw that it was the conductor of the Pullman. One of his arms hung limp. Bradford ran a step or two toward him. "My God! My God!" he cried, involuntarily. "You've broken your arm! You've broken your arm!" The crippled limb fascinated his eyes.

"Have you got a match?" asked the conductor.

Bradford stared at him in wonderment. Yet he thought, stupidly, if this was a dream one question was as sensible as another.

The conductor's voice went up an octave, and broke into a scream. "Got any matches, you of

THE CHAMELEON

careless parentage? you unfortunate, predestined, unmentionably qualified fool? Quick, can't you? Do you think this is a sky-rocketted, roman-candled, powder-magazined Sunday-school picnic?" Bradford, still in a daze, felt mechanically in his pocket and found his match-safe, which he drew out and offered to the conductor. But the latter motioned it back.

"Can you run? I can't; my leg's to the bad."

Bradford shook himself all over, tentatively. "I think I'm all right; I can run."

"Then run like hell, will you? Get down the track a quarter-mile and build a fire between the rails. God knows what we'll have on top of this mess next. Eleven is due in thirty minutes. Watch the fire, and when you see a headlight stand between it and the fire and wave at 'em—so."

Bradford began to run, in a daze, away from the wreck. When he had gone a hundred yards he stopped irresolutely. The thought struck him that he ought to go back and try to get some of those women out. That was the least a man could do. The girl in the gray dress! She, too, was in that hopeless welter! As, with her, the passengers lost

A LITTLE SINGING

their vagueness of outline, and became individual—Murdoch, and Bates the college professor, and the woman with the little freckled daughter, and the two boys from Princeton, and the old lady with the grudge against the physicians—he looked unsteadily back. A light—two lights—were moving about the wreck now. He groaned and ran on. When he judged that he had gone a quarter of a mile into the darkness he collected leaves and twigs and set fire to them. The road followed the gully backward, so there was plenty of brush. Presently he had the flames leaping and glowing red up and down the rails. The glare was like blood, and it acted on him curiously, suggesting what he feared to see when he went back, so that he turned very sick. But he worked on, staring all the time down the glimmering path for the coming of the headlight, half dreading it and half hoping for it, as knights of old waited and watched for the eye of the dragon they had to fight. Still the light did not come, and presently a brakeman with a lantern relieved him.

“How is it back there?” asked Bradford, eagerly.

THE CHAMELEON

“Bad,” answered the brakeman, curtly. “You go back; maybe they can use you, if you got your head with you. Most of ’em ain’t.”

So Bradford ran back. First he looked at his watch, wondering if it were not nearly morning, but it was only half-past one. Less than an hour ago he had been quietly reading his letter. He recalled that in a daze, it seemed so long since then.

The moon, almost down, showed him a very different scene when he turned the curve which had thrown them off. The gully below, the bank above, and the wreck itself were swarming with figures, thick and restless as ants. Here a small man, clad only in the upper half of a night-shirt, was aimlessly running to and fro, crying inarticulately. His bare feet were bleeding, but it was not pain which ailed him. A woman wrapped in a blanket sat, a triangle of misery, upon the ridge of one of the cars, whither she had climbed, and rocked to and fro moaning. Two men chopped away the sides of each car, searching for someone possibly still prisoned there. But the crowd was forward, near the water, where the engine, the baggage and mail-cars, and the day-coach had gone down to-

A LITTLE SINGING

gether in inextricable destruction. Snapping their couplings, they had plunged right down forty feet to the bottom of the ravine. There was the raw force of the accident. There the three doctors were busy. There, as he hastened forward, Bradford could see Murdoch, stripped to his shoes and trousers, the enormous chest of him heaving and sweating and straining; now he was lifting at an improvised lever, now encouraging some poor fellow underneath, now directing the efforts of a volunteer gang which worked at the other end of the car; never stopping, never wasting a motion, exhaling confidence from his mere mass and strength. Bradford stopped a second, terrified yet fascinated, as he had been at the first glimpse of the conductor's broken arm, where the doctors were doing their work. A voice at his elbow, indescribably piercing, altogether inhuman, smote on his strained ears, and he jumped around. The man in the torn night-shirt had followed him, and now laid a shaking hand upon his arm.

“I never believed in a hell!” he cried, shrilly. “I never believed in it!” He stared at the doctors with frightened, unreasoning eyes—the eyes of a

THE CHAMELEON

wild animal in terror. Suddenly he flung up his hands. "I never believed in it!" he repeated, insistently.

The doctor nearest Bradford turned. "Hold him," he said, sharply, and Bradford, though his flesh crept, seized the man in both arms in spite of his struggles. The doctor caught the man's little finger in both hands and wrenched it backward once. The sharp snap of a breaking bone followed. The man cried out in agony, but the shock had recalled his wits, and it was the cry of a man in pain, no longer a brute only. Bradford shivered so that he lost his hold upon him, and the man in the night-shirt, nursing his broken finger, stumbled away quietly. The doctor watched him a moment. "I thought that would do it," he said, in a satisfied fashion, and turned again to his work. Bradford said nothing. He wondered blankly of the girl in gray—had she still been on the train? Where was she now, and in what plight? There was no way for him to look for her. None of his thoughts were clear, though his senses remained almost preternaturally fine.

The hurly-burly continued, till the moon had

A LITTLE SINGING

slipped down the sky—the crash of axes and the ripping of wood, the oaths of those who worked and the moans of those who waited; the splash, in every silent second, of the water where it struggled by its sudden barriers. Bradford, in a dream, all the intellect of him vanished, sat and saw and heard it all. When the others noticed him they thought him hurt, perhaps, or even out of his senses for the time. But every tiny fraction of his emotional being was keenly alive. His nerves answered to every stroke of the axe, and every cry was like a call to *him* while he sat helpless and staring. An Irishman from the day-coach, who had gone to sleep drunk, and with the luck of drunken men come out from that hell of tangled cars unscratched, strode unsteadily by, singing:

*“ An’ the garmin’ts that he wure,
They was not at all befure,
An’ rather liss than half uv that behind.”*

Thus he warbled. “ Bedad, ’tis thrue uv me-silf!” He craned his neck backward earnestly to contemplate the damage he had sustained in the rear, and one of the doctors laughed. Bradford, taking his cue, unconsciously threw back his head,

THE CHAMELEON

too, and laughed—laughed at great length, unmusically, loudly, till the doctor cried sternly, “Here, stop that!” Bradford’s laughter ceased as suddenly as water turned off at the tap, and he fell to wondering *who* had laughed. And then, when he was rapidly nearing the border of the land whither the man with the torn night-shirt had wandered, a question, flung out to anyone, pierced through to his understanding.

“Can’t somebody sing? God above, men, sing something!” The voice was resonant and commanding; there was nothing despairing or querulous about it. Bradford knew it for Murdoch’s. He jumped up as if some spring within him had been pressed.

“Why, I can sing,” he said aloud. He waited for a moment, and then, without premeditation, entered upon the first bars of “Mandalay.” But his voice was not quite at his bidding, and wavered.

“Shut up that d——d cheeping!” shouted one of the axe-swingers near him, and Bradford paused obediently. But a moment later he heard Murdoch cry out in hearty encouragement, “Go on—sing!” and he called himself together and sang.

A LITTLE SINGING

Bradford could sing. There had been moments, in the old days, when the diapason of his bass went rolling and rolling through the hall, and women leaned forward and men held their breath to miss no note of it; when he found their hearts and played upon them, till their eyes were bright and wet by turns, and the little concert of the college Glee Club was transported out of the realm of comedy into the country of Song. There had been a time when the president's wife, after they lost their little girl, had come up to him very quietly and said, with a break in her voice, "Thank you, Mr. Bradford," and he had stammered, for once at a loss for words, "Why, we all loved her, Mrs. Craven; we couldn't help it," and she had answered simply, "I knew that from your singing; it is that that comforts me." There had been a time when the team won in the face of what seemed sure defeat, and at the celebration afterward they put Frankie Bradford up on a barrel beside the bonfire, and he gave them their triumphal marching-song, till they rocked the sky with their cheering, and drowned the verses, and snatched him from the barrel and charioted him

THE CHAMELEON

about on their shoulders with the captain of the eleven, shouting that never, no never, no never, till the sun grew old and the stars grew cold, should the fame of Frankie Bradford die. But as Bradford stood there on that torn gullyside, with the moon down now, while the axes fell and the shouting died away, he felt that he had never sung before. This, this was living—to pour himself out, while all around him listened and were soothed and comforted! He sang them all the songs he knew, grave and gay, quick and slow, the marches and the lullabies, cradle-songs and serenades. And then he turned to hymns. He blessed the days when he had sung in the college choir. He gave them now the odd old melodies that are the echoes of our childhood to us all—if they are doggerel, why, childhood is bathos, then—the dear old melodies which confute so wholly, so serenely the materialism and paganism and agnosticism and isms one and all which we have learned to turn to in these latter reasoning days. He gave them “Rock of Ages,” “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” “Jesus, Lover of my Soul,” “Shall We Gather at the River”; he sang on, the steady, strong, compel-

A LITTLE SINGING

ling undertone to all the wild ugly noises of that night of terror. And at last came the wrecking-train, with the reporters and the doctors—so runs the order of rescue nowadays—and the work was taken out of the hands of the volunteers.

So many were hurt that it was quite impossible for all the men to find places in the car. Murdoch and some of the others volunteered to walk down the track four miles to the little town, whence one of the train crew had telegraphed for help. Murdoch, now wrapped in a blanket, came up and shook hands with Bradford.

“I never saw a better gang of men than this,” he said; “but you are worth a dozen of us. By the Lord Harry, if it isn’t the young fellow in the smoker!” He shook hands again. “What’s your name—Bradford, ain’t it? I’ve got my niece back here—no, she’s not hurt a particle, not even scared, she says—she wanted me to thank you for your singing. Won’t you come back and let me introduce you, eh?”

Bradford was shaken, now that the glow was gone, and he was only one unnoticed among the others. The size and calm of the pickle-maker

THE CHAMELEON

grated upon his nerves. There were dead and dying people all around them; in the name of God, was this a time for introductions?

“I—I’m afraid I don’t feel quite up to it,” he said. “I’m—well, I’m rather shaky, you know.”

“Not hurt much?”

“No, not hurt. But shaky.”

Murdoch smiled contentedly. “I understand. We’ve all been on the stretch, and now we’re let go, so we’re crumpled—just like a string, that’s all.”

Some one touched Bradford’s arm.

“I am the correspondent for the Carfax Mercury. Do any of you gentlemen happen to know the name of the man who was singing just now—cheering on the work of rescue, and that sort of thing?”

“No,” said Bradford, curtly. He felt amusement in the man’s tone, and it jarred on him.

“I know it!” said Murdoch, turning back. He laid his hand on Bradford’s shoulder. “This is your man, and unless you give him a good send-off you’ll settle with me. His name is Bradford. I had his card a while ago, but I’ve left that and my other valuables in the care of the Carfax and Al-

A LITTLE SINGING

bans Railroad.” He pointed back to the tumbled cars. “But I think I’ll not need it to remember him by. Whenever I begin to forget his name I’ll just think of him halloing there in the moonlight like a d——d pipe-organ, and the rest of us rested just to hear him. He was worth a dozen of any of us.”

“Say twenty,” observed the whiskered Bates. He was badly cut over the eye, but appeared to ignore the fact. “Can you oblige me, sir, since you have your information, with a cigarette? I fear that mine are crushed. Moreover, I never carry any in my pajamas, which is an oversight when one travels on the Carfax and Albans Railway.”

The correspondent felt in his pocket eagerly. “I’m awfully sorry, but I haven’t got one, sir. What did you say your name was?” he asked Bradford.

“Francis Howell Bradford.” He felt odd to be giving it so, and yet not unpleased, either. “I have some cigarettes here, by the way.” He passed out his box, and they fell upon it.

“Did I say you were worth twenty of us?”

THE CHAMELEON

mourned Bates. "Pardon me; I meant a hundred."

"I make it two!" cried somebody else, gayly. Somehow their banter lightened the situation for Bradford and lessened the tension of his nerves; he became completely at his ease again. He answered the reporter's questions readily and carelessly. When they had all given their names, and spoken as they felt inclined, they felt better.

"I woke up on my head," said the man with the professor, "and the first thing I thought of was that it served me right for travelling on the Carfax and Albans."

Then they set forward up the track. They had witnessed blood and death, and just missed the clip of the final shears, but they were Americans, and so the past was past. Half of them were barefooted, and some wore nothing but a blanket. Only one man beside Bradford was fully dressed. With them trudged the little man with the broken finger; he was now entirely recovered from his madness, and cherished his hurt tenderly.

"I don't know how I came to break that!" he repeated, in a troubled fashion. "No, gentlemen,

A LITTLE SINGING

I don't know how I came to do that at all." Bradford laughed finally. "*I know*," he said, and told them. He told the story dramatically and well, adding a little color here and there; they all listened, and stared at the little man—all except Bates, who looked at Bradford instead, and puffed away on his cigarette. "You don't say!" was the little man's only comment. He had picked up somewhere a blanket and a straw hat, and confronted the coming dawn, a comical figure. But somehow the humor of it lessened as one saw the trouble in his eyes. "You don't say!" he whispered under his breath, and looked himself over curiously. No doubt he wondered where he had been in those few minutes. No wonder the problem puzzled him.

The walk was long. The dark east grew streaked and then rosy before they ended it. When they reached the village of Hoopsboro, their destination, Murdoch took command.

"We want a drink first and then some clothes." Early as it was, half the town was up to greet them, and an excess of guides piloted the whole company to the only saloon in the town—a grimy

THE CHAMELEON

building, half hotel, half bar. Many of the bucolic inhabitants crowded staring in behind. With their glasses before them, Murdoch made them all a little speech.

“Boys, we’re safely out of a bad hole. But there’s a lot back there still—as good as we are, not so fortunate, that’s all. We did all we could for them; we needn’t reproach ourselves. Still, it’s a sorrowful time for many a man and woman. There’s only one toast we can drink now, boys; I’d say drink it hats off, but I see we’re all of us bare-headed, anyway. It’s pity for those who are gone, and gratitude to God, who pulled us through.” His big, strong voice was reverent. They drank silently.

Murdoch wiped his lips. “Now,” he said, “for some clothes.”

Chapter Four

AFTER THE WRECK

The little freckled girl, whom Bradford had prayed might not become a nuisance ere the journey's end, would prove no annoyance to anyone again. Her mother sat tearless in one of the coaches, while the old lady who denied the utility of physicians tried feebly to comfort her. The two Princetoni-ans turned out to be much like other boys, ready with sympathy a little touched by awe. Tragedy, sweeping into the lives of all of them, brushed away the little affectations one constructs with so much care, and left each man or woman as he was—weak or strong, silly or sensible, callous or loving. Some joked, some swore, some wept, some worked. They had the papers at a little junction whither they had crawled by noon, and there learned first the full force of the accident, and the names of

THE CHAMELEON

their fellow-passengers who had so abruptly been hurried upon a longer journey than they meant to take. There were fourteen dead in the two mournful cars ahead; there were forty-two hurt. But of those in the Pullman, only the little freckled girl had been killed. Bradford saw, in one glimpse, the girl whom he had noticed and wondered over the afternoon before. So she had not left the train, he speculated. He still wondered who she was, but the shock of the accident dulled the edge of his wonder. He saw Murdoch go up and speak to her, and she smiled as she answered. He reflected with half a sneer and half a smile that Murdoch had probably spoken to every man, woman, and child on the train. There were few, indeed, whom he had not pressed to drink of the fusel-oil which passed in Hoopsboro for whiskey. He wore a black alpaca coat, of the sort book-keepers affect; a tie of all the colors of the rainbow garnished his throat. He had led the raid upon the "general store" of Hoopsboro, and these were among the spoils of war. The big pickle-maker put in the morning in exhortation; "no compromise for injury" was his theme. He of-

AFTER THE WRECK

ferred to advance money to fight any and all cases, and damned the railroad interminably.

Rapid events had left Bradford little time to think over his letter. Yet all the time it was in the back of his head; and on the slow journey home he found a spot where he could be alone to consider it. So he fancied; but he reckoned without the pickle-maker, who routed him out, and insisted once more upon shaking hands.

“If the papers don’t give you a send-off that’ll keep the town awake,” he said, “my name isn’t John Murdoch. Have a drink.” Bradford declined, but was overborne, and drank, shuddering, wishing that Murdoch might be drowned in his own pickle-vats—a sentiment which, however, he took some pains to conceal. When the papers came, he discovered that Murdoch had been right. There was the send-off indeed. Like the rest, he hurried through the long accounts to find his own name. He passed over the solemn roll of the dead, with all its scrupulosity and its inaccuracy, and its sad and fatal prophecies—“cannot recover”; “will die.” In the florid and spectacular account which followed, he read of himself under the head-line

THE CHAMELEON

“Singing Amid the Sorrow”; and editorially, too, he found that he was commented upon. He and Murdoch were singled out for praise. “Nowhere,” ran the curious journalese, “as in scenes of suffering and sorrow can we so plainly discern that tie of brotherhood which unites all men, from the emigrant in the smoker to the aristocrat in the Pullman. . . . Where all were heroes . . . it would be invidious to praise individuals. Yet the names of some stand out, bright spots even amid the brightness. . . . Francis H. Bradford. . . .” There was much more. He read with avidity; he smiled his superior smile at the frescoed English, but he was immensely pleased. It was while he was perusing the account of his own deeds that he felt a hand on his shoulder, and looking up saw again the beaming face of Murdoch.

“Well, they’ve done well by us, haven’t they? I must have scared that young chap last night when I threatened him with sudden death if he didn’t give us three cheers, eh? What do you think of it?”

“They’ve made me a tenor, for some reason,”

AFTER THE WRECK

laughed Bradford. "What a pity a man can't have his name copyrighted, so that the newspapers couldn't print it without his consent."

"You like people to let you alone, do you?"

"I won't say that. But I don't care to have a reporter's finger-marks all over my concerns. Does anybody?"

"Why not, when it's so much advertisement? Now they play me up in here; I suppose you noticed it. What of it? After all, it's true; I was there, and I pulled a few out. Why shouldn't I have the credit of it? Somebody must toot my horn, if people are to know that I'm around, and when I can get it tooted for me, I don't see why I should object."

"Neither do I, if you like the tunes they play. Personally, I'd rather make my own music, I think."

"I saw last night," said Murdoch, reminiscently, "that you hated to give that chap your name. I liked that. It wouldn't sell many pickles, that policy, but I kind of liked it just the same. Oh, don't deny it. You ain't the first man I've met

THE CHAMELEON

who thinks my billboards are too numerous." He chuckled. "Man said to me a few months ago, 'What do you stick your face all over the country for? It's not yourself you're trying to sell; it's pickles. Then why don't you advertise pickles?' I told him what I tell you—it's not only pickles, but my pickles, I want to get rid of. If you know a grocer you'll buy at his store, eh, in preference to another man's that may be just as good, but that you don't know? Well, that's the tack I'm on. People get to know who I am; then they buy my goods. They're good pickles, but they're no better than any others, I suppose. They're Murdoch's, that's all, and folks know who Murdoch is. You say you're going to be a lawyer? How do you expect to get started in the law if you don't advertise?"

"I'll do it in the old fashion," replied Bradford. "I'll hire an office, buy a sign, and put mucilage on the seat of my chair."

"Do!" cried Murdoch, contemptuously. "Do, and sit and watch the spiders on your desk. I tell you, my boy, things aren't done that way in this generation. You might as well expect to win

AFTER THE WRECK

a race by wishing. You go on that course, and you'll starve in a year."

"Then I shall be starving for principle," said Bradford.

"Bah!" replied the pickle-maker, and abruptly went away.

Bradford read again the account of the accident, no more able to resist the fascination of seeing his name in print than anyone else is. We may grumble and grow angry, but we are attentive until we have reached a certain stage of ennui, at which we may be sure we have become really famous. He could not help glancing furtively around, either, to see whether others were also interested in his doings. Alas, he discovered that as usual they were intent only upon their own. Yet he could not help hoping that a few—two or three—one, at least—of the lot wondered who he was. If only the girl in gray, instead of Murdoch's niece, had sent him her thanks and wanted to meet him! Or even if he had the serene confidence of the pickle-maker, and could speak to her off-hand, as Murdoch had been doing—and, by Heaven, was doing now! Why did he not go and minister to

THE CHAMELEON

the wants of his own angular, thin-chested, red-headed—Bradford ran out of epithets—relative, whoever and wherever she was, without forcing himself upon the company of other women? If Bradford could have found any pretext, he would have gone up and interfered; but he could think of none, so he sat still, fuming, instead. Presently Murdoch broke off his conversation, and returned again to Bradford's seat.

“Why don't you get in with a good firm, and begin that way?” he remarked, as if there had been no break in their conversation.

“Why not, indeed? You know the old proverb, Mr. Murdoch—‘First catch your firm.’”

“Don't you know any?”

“No, I don't. And you'll pardon me, Mr. Murdoch, if I say that I don't see——”

But the pickle-maker waved his hand.

“Now you're going to ask me what business it is of mine. Why, bless your heart, boy, of course it's my business. We lived pretty fast last night, so we've known each other a long time. We're old friends, you and I. Not but what I like your spirit; I do, by the Lord Harry! I don't believe

AFTER THE WRECK

in cackling till I've laid an egg, but by George, you go me one better; you wouldn't cackle at all, if you had your way. Somebody's got to take care of a man like you, and I swear I'm going to try the job."

"And suppose I prefer to take care of myself?"

"You don't know how. Listen here; do you know Barrett, Barrett and Cooper?"

"Do I know the Trinity, Mr. Murdoch? I assure you I had a religious bringing-up."

Murdoch laughed. "Barrett, Barrett and Cooper—that's what they call 'em, the Father, the Son, and the Other Fellow. You've heard of 'em, eh? Well, what do you think of that firm? How'd you like to go in with them, hey?"

"I should like it, of course; but——"

"But what?"

"They don't know me, you see; my valuable talents are hid under a bushel, as far as they're concerned."

"Mine ain't! They do my law business," said Murdoch, sententiously.

Now Barrett, Barrett and Cooper are as well known in Carfax as the King of England, or the

THE CHAMELEON

captain of the Carfax College eleven. They are the leading law firm; they are supposed to receive in fees and commissions considerably over two hundred thousand dollars a year. Their office, moreover, has for long been known to afford the best training and opportunity a young lawyer can by any means secure. Bradford knew this as well as anyone; and knowing it, he said lightly,

“Really, Mr. Murdoch, I am glad to hear it; but your name and mine are pronounced differently, you know. It is quite possible that they may know you without being aware of my existence.”

It amounted to a flippant rejection of Murdoch’s implied offer. The moment he had said it Bradford was sorry; but only for a moment. The pickle-maker went serenely on. “Yes, but suppose I say to Barrett, Barrett and Cooper, ‘Here’s a young man, Mr. Bradfield——’”

“Bradford,” insisted the young man.

“Bradford, I should say. He’s going into the law. Take him into your office and try him. If he’s what I think he is, you’ll have a good man, and he’ll have some of John Murdoch’s law busi-

AFTER THE WRECK

ness. If he turns out bad, there's no harm done.' Suppose I say that—you wouldn't refuse the job, would you, my independent young friend?"

"See here, Mr. Murdoch," said Bradford, not knowing whether to be annoyed or amused, "you showed me a minute ago that you didn't even know my name yet. Are you trying to make fun of me? Because, if you are, I'll laugh. If you're not——"

"Well, if I'm not?"

"Then I won't laugh."

"What will you do?"

"Thank you and tell you it's impossible."

"And then *I'd* laugh," said Murdoch. "Why is it impossible? I like your looks; I like your actions; I like your voice. I don't have to have a printed card handed me before I dare say good-morning to a man, do I? You think I'm making a snapshot judgment? Well, I'll tell you. For one thing, you're from Carfax College; that's in your favor. I like the boys from there. For another, you've got a tongue in your head; and for a third, you know how to keep it there. But the best thing, and the biggest thing, is this; you don't have to be told what is to be done. Take last

THE CHAMELEON

night, for instance; you were the man who set the signal behind, weren't you?"

"Yes, but——"

"But nothing. I thought of it, and then I heard a man had gone back already, so I did some other things that needed to be done. Don't tell me, young man. I don't make mistakes in men; I can't afford it. If you'll take this job with Barrett, Barrett and Cooper, you can have it."

"I'll take it—if they offer it to me."

"Give me your address; they'll write to you."

"Thank you."

"And by the way—can't you find time to come around and see me some evening? I'd like mighty well to hear that voice of yours again, and so would Amy. I was too busy last night to get it all, I reckon."

"I'd be delighted." He wondered what sort of person Amy might be; what sort of company he would be likely to find gathered at Murdoch's mansion—that sort of person always lives in mansions, he reflected. His original portraits of Murdoch's family were now slightly rose-colored, the hue being transferred as his kindness toward Murdoch in-

AFTER THE WRECK

creased. Even the niece, he suspected, might be roughly presentable, now that her uncle had recognized so quickly the sterling mark in Bradford's metal. And the pickle-maker's wife began to abate her querulousness; her thin bosom amplified, her face sweetened, her garments shaped themselves to a less gorgeous splendor. The incredible offspring grew possible; if there was a little girl, Bradford determined heroically that he would take her in his lap, and tell her the story of the Princess and the Frog. He began to recall the details of this story, many of which he had forgotten; but Murdoch interrupted him by leaving. They had another drink together from Murdoch's flask, and Bradford said something rather witty about the exhaustless cruse of oil—"fusel-oil," he explained, under cover of which Murdoch got away without subjecting either of them to what seemed to Bradford the embarrassment of thanks.

The afternoon drew on, and they were nearing Carfax. They all began to exchange good-bys—hearty good-byes, full of meaning, because they had stepped out of the commonplace together. This evening they would go their ways, and most

THE CHAMELEON

of them would never see each other more, yet they would always cherish a subconscious friendliness for those who had come through safely, and a subconscious sorrow for those who had not. Many of the passengers, before they left, hunted up Bradford to tell him how much they were indebted for his singing; and he thought them typical, whole-souled, generous-hearted Americans, and liked them all, unless indeed it were Bates, the man with the whiskers. Bates remarked, as they shook hands,

“I shall always hope for the company of a wandering minstrel when I travel on the Carfax and Albans, Mr. Bradford. How does it seem to be a bright spot amid the brightness?”

“Reporters are past-masters of the art of embarrassment, aren’t they?”

“They are,” said Bates. “And the worst of it is, that sometimes they don’t mention us at all.”

Then the train drew into Carfax, and among the crowd that pranced in impatience behind the railings, sternly held in check by the gateman, in spite of oaths and adjurations and tears—among this mob of relatives, as he phrased it, Bradford

AFTER THE WRECK

saw Slim and Kate and Shedsy; and when they perceived him they rent the air of the station with their cries.

“Which is Frankie Bradford, the bright spot?” they demanded. “Yonder is Frankie Bradford, the bright spot.”

“Shut up, you turgid idiots,” he muttered. “There are dead people back here. Oh, if I could get to you!” He was hastening to do so, when he felt a touch upon his shoulder, and turning, saw Murdoch again.

“Found your friends?” asked the pickle-maker. “I won’t detain you; but I thought I’d like to introduce you to my niece. Amy, this is Mr. Bradford.”

She bowed; Bradford’s head whirled about uncertainly. This the niece he had been avoiding—this girl in gray? He stammered, and the crowd swirled them about, and separated them, and he went on to join his friends.

Chapter Five

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

The big arms of Kate went promptly round Bradford's neck. In this there was nothing improper; Kate's name in full was Cato Henry Strong, and he had been too unsophisticated when he came up to Carfax College to suppress the first part. Later, when he became an integral part of the football team, the nickname turned to a badge of honor.

"Dear old boy," he said, softly, "we *are* glad to see you! And how did you leave the royal family?"

Shedsy—*his* name was Edward Baker Barnes on the college books—Shedsy seized a free hand and wriggled it up and down energetically. He was a round, stout young man. Women who heard of his popularity among men marvelled, and said, "*That* Mr. Barnes!" incredulously. But the men explained vaguely that he fitted. He was the round peg in the round hole, someone once said.

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

His friendliness defied analysis. There is a popular belief that the talkative man lacks balance. Quite unconsciously, Shedsy Barnes employed himself in refuting this theory. He talked so fast he stammered; the big words tumbled over each other's backs clumsily, like young puppies.

"Frank, for any sake, come from out this heaving multitude before you are recognized," he said. "Our congratulations and our ch-cheerful assurances of h-health must all await a more ap-appropriate moment. The insatiate re-reporters will mangle you limb from limb if you tarry. Come, O Atrides, sons of Olympus! For heaven's sake, g-get a move on!"

Slim said nothing at all, after Slim's slow fashion. When he had an opportunity he shook hands, in his own way; he gave Bradford's fingers one tremendous clutch, looking squarely in his eyes, then dropped them. They tingled afterward. Women have been known to scream when Slim shook hands with them—much to his embarrassment and fright. He too was round; round and very earnest. Youth was serious business to Slim.

THE CHAMELEON

Now the impetuosity of Shedsy carried them away. Bradford tried to give a hotel address to the transfer agent, but they laughed at him, and substituted another, away out collegeward.

“If you fellows think,” protested Bradford, “that I am going back to boarding-housing, now that I am a free man——”

Shedsy interrupted. “You are going,” he declared, with joyful deliberation, “to assist in the formation of the Residuum.”

“What is the Residuum?”

“It’s a new kind of Welsh rabbit,” answered Kate, seriously. Shedsy grinned. But when Bradford demanded to know more, they hooted at him, and refused to tell him anything. They hurried him across the city, and northward till the houses thinned, and in the east one had a glimpse now and then of the splendid, sullen river rolling on; and north still, till the old wooden buildings, and new stone buildings, and the brick buildings of doubtful age, like independent spinsters who make up in respectability what they lack in beauty—till the buildings one and all of Carfax College greeted him across the windy, electric-lighted prairies.

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

They whisked him round a corner and up a stair and into an apartment.

“Now while my Lord the Globe-trotter takes his bath and makes himself like one of the l-lilies of the field, let us see to the p-preparation of a feast meet even for s-such as he.”

“Is this the Residuum?”

“Hustle, Frank; we’re dying to hear about it all, especially the singing.”

So he went to his bath. But they were too impatient to wait, these children of twenty-six or so—Kate would take his Ph.D. in less than a year; Shedsy was a “business man,” in a bank somewhere among the commercial jungles of Carfax; and Slim taught in a girls’ school. It was the reaction from the clatter there, said Kate, which made Slim so silent elsewhere. They all came and sat upon the edge of the tub where Bradford reclined at ease while he rehearsed the story of the wreck.

“Here was the side of the ravine, you see, shelving so, and curving so. The engine left the track, and pulled the rest of us after her. I was in the last Pullman; both Pullmans turned half

THE CHAMELEON

over and then stopped. That left the window in the roof, so to speak. I was all dressed—I'd been sitting up—and I just climbed through, and there I was, monarch of all I surveyed; not a person could I see, except the woman in the moon—she was there, looking as curious as usual. I tell you it was eerie. I thought for a minute—of course I was half-crazy, and I just sort of wondered it—that all the passengers but me were killed. It made me sick, I think.”

“But what did you think of before you got out, Frank—while you were l-lying there in the smoker?” Shedsy's blue eyes were very eager.

Bradford hesitated. “Well, I don't know exactly. There was a girl I had noticed before—a smooth girl, mighty smooth. I think I just wondered, for a minute, whether she had been hurt or not, and if she could get out.”

Shedsy shot a significant, affectionate look at Kate. “Of course you did! Most of us would have been wondering which was the quickest way out, I'll bet; but I said to Kate——”

“Bosh!” interrupted Bradford, quickly. “You

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

would all do just what I did. Now get out of here, or I'll splash the pretty clothes of you."

"But about the singing?"

"I'll tell you when I've adorned my beauty." So they went reluctantly out, and Bradford, splashing in his tub, carolled lustily.

"I arise from dreams of thee, in the first sweet sleep—Kate?"

"Yes?"

"You haven't told me a word of anybody."

"I will, though. Who, for choice?"

"Well—how's Ethel Blayne?"

"She's engaged to Champ."

"Champ Rogers?"

"None other."

"Champ is really engaged?"

"'Tis true, 'tis pity; pity 'tis, 'tis true."

"When the winds are breathing low, and the stars are—Kate?"

"Yes?"

"How's Roger Van?"

"Roger isn't expected to recover."

"Wha-at?"

"True as Gospel, Frank."

THE CHAMELEON

"But, Great Scott, Kate—why, what's the matter with him?"

"Matrimony."

"Not really?"

"As thy servant liveth, O King."

"Battle, murder, and sudden death for poor old Roge! Where the champak's odors blow—say, my Katrine?"

"Yes?"

"And is Bob really engaged, as you wrote me, or was that a fake?"

"Wait till you see the foolish look in Bob's eye, and you'll know."

There was renewed sound of splashing from within. Then came mournfully, "But Kate?"

"Well?"

"Who in heaven's name is left to us? Have the waves swept all the beaches clean?"

"There yet remain some few pebbles."

"Who, then?"

"Yourself, for instance."

"Yes—I am faithful, thank God." A swift flash of memory made Bradford blush a little here, but his voice was determined.

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

“And myself.”

“Not you, Kate. You never mentioned Marion Craven to me, all the letters you sent me in a year.”

Kate, too, reddened; and unfortunately for him, he was under the eyes of both Slim and Shedsy. Yet he maintained stoutly,

“Myself, I say. And Shedsy, and Slim.”

“Well, I’m glâd there are even four righteous in this hymeneal Gomorrah. ‘And a spirit in my feet hath led me’”—the voice died away.

The three outside exchanged glances. “He’ll go in!” said Shedsy, triumphantly.

At dinner he told them all over again about his singing. That was a most unpretentious little dining-room. At the side it looked out across a waste of lots and streets, flat and ragged, but with outlines softened in the coming evening. Beyond glittered white and green the cottonwoods, those complaisant trees which will grow in any soil, and demand only the privilege of showering just and unjust with their fluttering fuzz. Within there was a table, a side-board, and four pictures—armored young Sir Galahad staring pensively into the dimming woods; two petulant-looking lions

THE CHAMELEON

issuing from an enormous cave; a sepia sketch of a girl; and a framed photograph of Borden Hall. But three, at least, of these men were used to the bare dreariness of Borden from the inside; it stands mellowly enough in the shadowy photograph, but within are many a crack and many a soiled wall. And all of the four knew well the dreary inhospitality of the Carfax boarding-house. This spot was far more to them than the glory of gilt or the grandeur of horse-hair. The napkins were their own napkins, the dishes their own dishes—some by right of purchase, and more by virtue of the quick fingers and easy morality of the undergraduate. “I’ve fed for many years,” said Shedsy, “and now, by G-Gosh, I’m going to eat.”

“We three,” said Shedsy, “are believers in bachelorhood—though we have our doubts about Kate. But we can’t see why, because we are bachelors, we should therefore be de-deprived of all the comforts of home. So we rented this palatial residence, securing a m-ministering angel in the shape of a h-housekeeper, and named ourselves the Residium. We counted on you, of course. Will you join us?”

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

“Why the Residuum, Shedsy?”

“Well, because we th-think we’re like the g-gold that’s left when all the less valuable stuff is drained away, don’t you see?”

“Cradled away, you mean.”

“S-since I’m speaking of marriage, I suppose I do.”

“I’ll come in, of course.”

“Three ch-cheers for you! Let’s drink to ourselves—with one foot on the table. In sickness or health, in poverty or wealth, till death do us part—to the Residuum!”

“To the Residuum!” they cried, standing and waving their glasses. Thus easily was formed what Shedsy fondly imagined would endure. Poor Shedsy! Any philosopher could have told him that he was opposing his puny efforts to the forces of the universe. Kate, even, might have confessed—but Kate would have been the first to deny that he had anything to confess. And Bradford was so far from suspecting the grip which fate had suddenly laid on him, that he began to speak carelessly of the girl he had met that day.

“I suppose,” he said, “there is no country like

THE CHAMELEON

America for royal roads—royal roads everywhere; short cuts to learning, and to wealth, and to power, and to fame. Once, when a man wanted an education, he devoted the good years of his life to getting it; now he reads the fifth page of the newspaper. A woman turns over the sheet, and finds out in five minutes how to be beautiful though ugly, and how to be married though poor. In Europe a man makes a hundred thousand dollars in twenty years, here he picks up a million in half an hour. While you wait you can be provided with a full set of teeth or a full set of ancestors. I talked with a man to-day who boasted that eleven years ago he hadn't a cent, and now he doesn't know what to do with his money. He is ignorant, blatant, and rich as Cræsus. He had originally, I think, all the virtues; he hasn't added a single grace. He makes pickles; he confers favors on poor young men with the air of a king and the tact of an Afghan, and his name is Murdoch.

“What—the hero of the accident?”

“Precisely so; the hero of the accident. Understand, I just admitted that he had all the virt-

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

ues. All I say is, that he has come to his present place by a short cut, like ten thousand others, and what he has gained in speed he has lost in knowledge. Take two men who set out for the same spot; one has plenty of time, sees the countryside, hears the birds singing, picks a few flowers, and by and by in the twilight comes to his rest, peacefully and full of pleasant memories. The other never gets out of the dust he makes himself. He arrives; that is all you can say for him. Well—that's Murdoch."

"Did he tr-tread on your corns, my saunterer?"

"On the contrary, he was very nice to me. I am merely moralizing, Shedsy. I haven't yet got to my point—which is this. Of all the American short cuts, there is nothing to compare with the American girl's short cut to style. Did you fellows notice a little girl at the station to-day who wore gray, and had Eyes?"

"Was she with a st-stupendous friend in alpaca?"

"She was. I saw her yesterday on the train, and I thought, 'Here is some princess in disguise. Here is a girl who can give Lady Clara

THE CHAMELEON

Vere de Vere, the daughter of a hundred earls, half the pack and beat her.' She looked to me like the real thing. Do you want to know who she is? She is none other than the niece, as I learned to-day, of my pickle-maker!"

"Is she any the less the real thing, Frank?"

"I wonder! Can the American girl take the short cut, and still gain all the advantages of the long way round? She is hardly one remove from the vinegar, Kate; will one generation do away with the odor? Is she the real thing? That is what I complain about in our life here. We can't tell the real thing from the imitation. We haven't any final standards of judgment. When the market is full of counterfeit money, you may be fooled, but when in doubt you can at least go to the bank and learn wisdom. But with men and women there is no cashier to consult."

"Your problem settles itself, Frank. If you can't tell the real from the imitation, take both with a light heart."

"My dear Kate, that's just where I can't agree with you. When I wear diamonds, I want to know their value. If I choose to exhibit paste to

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

the world, I am glad if the world is deceived; but when I have the sneaking knowledge that I don't myself know the stone from the paste, then I'm uneasy. Take this girl. It seems impossible that she can be real; yet we are so wonderful a nation that she may be. How is one to discover? You are about to tell me that tests can surely be applied, and you are right. But they take a long time. Suppose one should devote his life to employing them, and discover at the end that his diamond was paste?"

Shedsy came round the table and put his hand on Bradford's shoulder. "Frankie," he said, sadly, "Th-that way madness lies. The nebular hy-hypothesis is a bagatelle to the problem of Woman. Did you never hear the little story of the cat and the fox? Th-the fox said he knew a hundred ways out of tr-trouble; the cat said he knew only one, and that was to climb a tree. Pr-presently trouble came: the cat climbed a tree, and the f-fox, while he was th-thinking which way to take, g-got it in the neck. When Woman gets into the game, Fr-Frankie dear, profit by this little fa-fable, and climb a tree."

THE CHAMELEON

"Shedsy believes that because seven devils were once cast out of one woman, the same number are still in all the others."

"I d-don't; I don't at all. I respect the sex highly, and I admire them, too, in a way. But I see them c-coming and c-catching all my friends, and d-doing something to them so that they're not friends of m-mine any more; and I'm frightened, that's all. What b-bosh you are talking! Frankie, you haven't told us about your singing."

"Nothing to tell. Music was requested, and I was too lazy to work, so I sang instead."

"Y-yes!"

"That was all there was to it, honestly."

"Did they like it?"

"Seemed to."

"If you were so la-lazy, why did you run back half a mile and kin-kinde the beacon, my son?"

Bradford hesitated; then he smiled. "If a Pullman conductor came at you with a pistol, and told you to take your choice of going back or staying where you were—permanently—which would you choose?"

"He didn't!"

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

"I'd rather you didn't mention it, because it might be misinterpreted; but he did."

"But w-why *shouldn't* you go back?"

"I had a theory, until I saw him, that I could do more good by pulling someone out, perhaps."

Shedsy's face cleared. "Of course!" he meditated, softly. "I might have known." Still, there was a little awkward pause, till Bradford broke it by laughing.

"You were thinking I had been afraid of the dark, perhaps?"

"No, no, no!" protested Shedsy.

They sat a long while over their coffee and cigarettes, finding each other out afresh after Bradford's long absence. Later, when they had grown reacquainted, Kate went off to study, and Slim slipped away to bed, and finally even the indefatigable Shedsy, cursing the early hours he had to keep, retired; but Bradford sat up. He had a letter to write, he said.

Yet he waited an hour before he wrote it. He began to speculate once more concerning the girl in gray; his thoughts wandered far afield, and before he was aware he had made her acquaintance,

THE CHAMELEON

found her all his instant fancy guessed, and begun telling her his dreams. Then he stopped and laughed. Nothing so gauzy as a dream, he told himself, would hold the attention of a pickle-maker's niece. She would want material things: Position, in particular. Possibly she even read Debrett and aspired to a title by marriage. That would depend on the continued success of the Shakespeare Brand, and the financial measure of her uncle's affection for her. A man who could dower unknown young men with golden chances would not be likely to haggle, however, over any bargain connected with his niece. Bradford had no scruple in accepting Murdoch's favor. He did not analyze his own motives, or perhaps he might have discovered that he scarcely regarded it as a favor at all. There are men born to give, and men born to receive, just as in the economy of nature there are lakes as well as rivers; their functions are different but equally creditable.

At length he came to the letter he had received from his mother. He thought it over, at this removal from the heat of perusal, with some reluctance. He felt no desire to read it again.

SPEAKS OF PASTE DIAMONDS

Long as the time seemed since he had opened it, Bradford had not forgotten a bit of it. It had disappointed him, though this he did not admit to himself. The news of his father's suicide and its cause came to him with a detached and impersonal effect. Bradford could barely remember his father. He was interested as a man might be in reading a story which was engrossing in itself, and whose author was known to him; that was all. There remained, then, only the part of the letter made personal—his mother's hopes and fears for him. Bradford was a man who followed, or thought he followed, the advice of the old Greek—"Know thyself." The letter only gave a fillip to his self-analysis. When he had pondered a long time, he took pen and paper and began to write. "To my mother in heaven," was the address he set at the head of the page. He wrote for some time, and very steadily. Then he stopped, and read over what he had written; added a few more lines, signed it; seized a match and set fire to the corner. But before the paper had more than flickered into a blaze, Bradford, on second thoughts, extinguished it, folded it, sealed it in an envelope, and put it carefully away.

Chapter Six

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

“Belle mère!”

“Yes, dear.”

“I’m growing—old.”

“Yes?”

“And this afternoon——” The president’s daughter paused. Mrs. Craven, the president’s wife, continued to arrange the china buckets into which, later, she would pour the tea. Her teapot, which was shaped like a pump, was bizarre in appearance—but oh, the tea she poured thence!

“And this afternoon,” Marion Craven continued, “I decided that it was high time for me to begin to rouge.”

“Marion!”

“’Sabelle! Call me no more Marion; call me Mary Ann, for great waters have gone over my head.”

The president’s wife came round the table, her

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

buckets being now arranged to her liking, and took her step-daughter firmly by both shoulders. Mrs. Craven was used to Marion's vagaries of speech, yet she fancied that for some reason this was a time for sympathy. "Marion, what's the matter?"

"Matter enough, my dear. Two days ago I was—I was——"

"I know, dear."

"Let me say it while my courage endures, 'Sabelle. I was—thirty-four."

"But *I* am forty-six."

"You have a right to be. Alas, I have no right to be thirty-four."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm a single woman; and no single woman has a right to be her age—if she looks it. Yes; it is time for me to begin to rouge."

"You don't look your age, dear."

The president's daughter returned her look wistfully. "Honestly, now?" Then she shook her head. "That remark would be malicious from any other woman than you, *ma mère*. It implies what I was hoping wasn't true."

THE CHAMELEON

“What is that?”

“That I am so old I am afraid people will find it out.”

“Afraid who will find it out?”

“Nobody in particular. Still, it is true that I saw somebody this morning. He was an old pet of yours—of ours, I mean.”

“We have had so many old pets, haven’t we?”

“But this is a special one.”

The president’s wife considered. “Harry Ford?”

“The aw-tust? No, no. I never cared what *he* thought.”

“Who then?”

“Frank Bradford.”

“Oh—Mr. Bradford? I think I heard that he was back.”

Marion nodded. “Yes, he is back. And so good-looking! And so polite! And so—old! Why, I remember him as a little boy, almost. It is dreadful to have antediluvian memories. When one cannot forget the vision of one’s admirers in knickerbockers one realizes bitterly her tale of years.”

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

"I should like to see him."

"You will, dear. I asked him to come this afternoon."

"I'm glad you thought to."

The president of Carfax College, coming in with a letter in his hand, interrupted them. "Isabelle," he said.

"Yes, Doctor."

"Langton writes me that he will be in Carfax on the 29th. I have asked him to stay with us, of course."

"Of course, Doctor."

The president's daughter patted down his black tie affectionately. "You do tie ties so well, father. I often think that if the demand for college presidents lessens, you could make such a lovely clerk."

Dr. Craven shook his white head meditatively. "I'm afraid not, Marion. They want young men now, I hear. Isabelle?"

"Well, dear?"

"You remember Langton, don't you? He was here in '79, I think."

"But I wasn't, Doctor."

THE CHAMELEON

“So? Why, of course.”

“*I* remember him, father. But don't you dare let him know it.”

Her father contemplated her, a trifle puzzled, but his thoughts refused to busy themselves with her remark, and presently his brow cleared. He looked at the table approvingly, as it shone with glass and silver filigree and blossomed with china, and said, irrelevantly,

“Isabelle, did you know that Mr. Murdoch was elected yesterday to the board of trustees?”

“Yes, doctor; you told us. The pickle-maker.”

“I believe he does manufacture something of the sort—yes.”

“Will he set up vats in the dormitories, father?”

“Marion!”

“Well, dear, I didn't know. I really don't see why he should be on the board, otherwise.” Marion's voice was a little acid.

“He has deserved the election,” answered the president, with sudden spirit. “He is the most prominent graduate we have.”

“The richest, father.”

“It comes to the same thing, apparently,” ob-

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

served Dr. Craven, quietly. His wife crossed over and took his arm.

“Do you mind his being on the board, dear?”

“I? No. He will represent the younger men. I fear there may have been stagnation in the affairs of the college. I may have been too anxious to progress safely, and have ended by not progressing at all. We must keep up with the procession, you know.”

“I wish he had stayed in his own business, and not meddled with ours.”

“Marion!” rebuked the president once again. “The college is not mine, you know; it belongs to us all. It *is* his business. Besides, he is to be our guest.”

“Is he coming this afternoon?”

The president nodded.

Dr. Craven's name had been associated with Carfax College for thirty-seven years—eleven as professor of Greek, twenty-six as president. The time is now past when instructors in ancient languages are considered fit persons to head our institutions of learning. It passed when the emphasis was transferred from “learning” to “institu-

THE CHAMELEON

tion.” Moreover, Dr. Craven was unsuited in many ways to modern methods. To begin with, he was a minister. And more than this, he was a minister who for twenty years had been engaged with a “Commentary on the Four Gospels,” and still hoped to finish Matthew by the end of the next long vacation. In the second place, he was sixty-five. In the third place, he cherished the old theory of a college, which is, to put it alliteratively, boys, books, and benches—so far had the times drifted by him! With such a steward, and surrounded by other graybeards like him on the board of trustees, slumbered Carfax College. Like the princess in the fairy-tale, it slept while the changing years passed unheeded.

But meanwhile no such enchanted lethargy possessed Carfax the city. Every year smoke came coiling from a hundred new factories, and soiled the façades of ten thousand new houses. Railroads shot from the four quarters of the country, and found their target in Carfax. One fancied they came in every day, like monstrous commercial travellers, and registered a fresh steel signature on the welcoming guest-book. With the growth of

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

business came the clamor that Carfax College should grow too. Wanted—a Fairy Prince to wake the Sleeping Beauty! Carfaxians were aware that a college was out of date; a university was their desire. At first the whitehaired trustees resisted, but the pressure was becoming very strong. John Murdoch, Carfax Eighty-blank, manufacturer of pickles, was among those who had voiced most strenuously the need for new plans and new life. Now John Murdoch had been elected to the board of trustees. The camel's head was in; would the beast ultimately possess the tent? What Dr. Craven thought no one knew. Yet it is true that Dr. Craven had been gently pessimistic for some years—ever since the death of his second little girl, the child of his old age. He had given a kind of grandfatherly adoration to this little Isabelle. When she went away from him he grew older fast. He lived now only in the college. That, too, was his child; it was part of him. Perhaps because he saw a day coming when the college too would be taken away from him, he loved it all the more. He never allowed himself to wonder about that day, however. He saw the signs of coming change, but

THE CHAMELEON

it seemed impossible that the change could come in his time.

The guests began to dribble in. These Thursday afternoon teas of the President's wife were features of Carfax College life. Of old she had held them on Saturday, but they interfered so seriously with the football games that popular request succeeded in setting them back to Thursday. They had not the charm of selectness, these teas; anyone on the faculty was welcome to drop in; students were frequently invited; now and again townspeople were there, or visitors who came bearing the passports of Scholarship or Art. Yet the rooms were somehow never crowded, as they were never less than charming. The president's wife, in a mysterious fashion of her own, kept the assemblages as she wanted them, and they remained in memory with a queer grateful fragrance, like lavender sachets. Even the tea was different and better than that one drank elsewhere—a kind of Russian blend. Mrs. Craven liked to have you praise it, but when you asked her where she got it she only smiled. Indeed, some of her many lovers said you might as well ask her where she got her

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

still, placid, satisfying manner, her sympathetic, low voice, her delicious attar-of-roses conversation—so pleasant and so rare. That tea, they insisted, was the common garden Hyson of the grocer's shop; but in Mrs. Craven's hands it became—what you knew. What could you expect—since the hands were Mrs. Craven's?

Bradford and Kate came in together. Kate was the Doctor's ewe lamb. Looking at Kate's thews and sinews, one doubts the applicability of the metaphor. Let us then say simply, Kate was the one graduate student in Greek. The Doctor's Greek was his wine of life; Kate was the spice in the wine.

Bradford and the Doctor—everyone called him the Doctor, even his wife—he was that kind of man—fell into shop-talk, while Mrs. Craven welcomed Bradford, poured him a cup of tea, and asked about his European journey. Her words were the simplest possible, but somehow Bradford felt that she was really interested. That was Mrs. Craven's way. But presently he was driven away, and found himself talking to a woman of a very different sort. Miss Mangler was the one woman

THE CHAMELEON

member of the faculty of Carfax College. She was an assistant in history. The undergraduates called her "The Curse."

She included in her vestal smile both Bradford and the tall assistant-professor of mathematics. "Have you seen our author?" she inquired. "No? Oh, you must." She showed her teeth, of which she was justly proud. "Very handsome, very malicious, and very popular of course. But not with me; not with me."

"Why not?" politely inquired the assistant-professor of mathematics. (His name was Carhart, by the way, but so few people knew him that it had almost fallen into disuse.)

"He quotes Longfellow," she shuddered. "Longfellow is the curse of America. We cry to our poets for meat, and are fed on mush."

"William Longfellow is captain of the eleven," murmured the assistant-professor of mathematics. "I must inquire whether they are related."

"At least they are not the same," retorted Miss Mangler, tartly.

"I know, I know," placidly responded the assistant-professor.

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

"But which of these people is the author?" asked Bradford, with an appearance of interest.

"The one with the pink eyes," she snapped. "You should meet him. He borrows his style, steals his incidents, and copies his characters. Second-hand literature is the curse of America."

"Have you met him? Will you present us?"

"I have not," she answered; "nor do I expect to." Miss Mangler's air was that of one who would resist to the uttermost any attempt to force the acquaintance. At this moment a woman in the group around the author beckoned to The Curse. Miss Mangler left them almost with a rush. The next instant they beheld the author's introduction, and Miss Mangler in animated conversation with him.

"The curse of America," muttered the assistant-professor of mathematics.

"The curse of—Carfax," responded Bradford. Carhart's eye, revolving in his direction, kindled slightly, though his sad mouth remained unchanged. "What do you think?" he asked, with grave irrelevancy, "of the chances of the eleven?"

THE CHAMELEON

"I think more of the chances than I do of the eleven," answered Bradford. "But I really don't know. I only got back two days ago."

"Really?" inquired the assistant-professor, with mournful courtesy. He seemed to ponder the statement in all its bearings. Then he remarked, "We should win from Upton, however."

"We should," said Bradford; "but shall we?"

"I think we shall," replied Carhart. "I—think—we—shall." He observed the tea-table, or its whereabouts, narrowly, and fell silent once more.

Suddenly Bradford ejaculated something. Carhart, turning his head, seemed mildly to interrogate him, and he went on, with a laugh,

"There's Murdoch, the pickle-maker."

"Proprietor of the Shakespeare Brand—yes," admitted Carhart, without turning his glance that way.

"What is *he* doing here?"

"He has been elected, I believe, to the board of trustees."

"Murdoch?"

"Yes. He used to play guard on the eleven;

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

left guard, I think it was; but I cannot seem to remember."

To this athletic reminiscence Bradford paid no heed. "Curious, that!" he remarked.

The assistant-professor digested this. "Not curious," he replied at length. "He was a good guard. I wish we had as good a one now." He sighed gently. "What do *you* think of the chances—ah, pardon, I think I asked you that before."

"I must be hunting up *other* friends, I am afraid," interrupted Bradford, rapidly. "Social duties, you know. Good-afternoon, Mr.—ah—Carhart; I'm awfully glad to have seen you."

Carhart's sad eyes followed him as he hastened away. They saw everything; they had seen the indifferent curve of his lips. But this, of course, Bradford did not know. He was looking for Marion Craven, and presently he discovered her, in a corner with Kate. Kate was talking animatedly, and Miss Craven was flushed a trifle.

"Hope I don't interrupt?"

"No."

"Miss Craven, I wish you would do me a great

THE CHAMELEON

favor—the kind of favor which will deliver me helpless into your hands.”

“I sha’n’t know what to do with you, but I’ll be glad to grant the favor.”

“Do you see that little girl in gray?”

“Which little girl in gray? Even I am wearing gray. This is a gray year, Mr. Bradford.”

“I mean the one with her uncle, the pickle-maker, yonder. The one who makes the gray look spring-like; you can’t miss her.”

“Do you mean to imply that the rest of us make it look sere, Mr. Bradford? In the name of the Prophet—thanks!”

Bradford reflected that he had never liked Marion Craven—which was not true; it was merely the reflex of his embarrassment. But he hastened to say, with a smile,

“I’ve met her, you see, but I’m afraid she may not remember it; it was hurried. I want somebody influential to vouch for me.”

Miss Craven vouched for him, and in a moment he found himself bowing to the young woman he had been speculating about. Her name, he learned,

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

was Power—Amy Power. For the first time he could see her fairly.

She was very young—not more than nineteen. When she spoke his name her voice was as cool as a trout-brook in August. For a description of her face as it appeared to Bradford one must refer to the dictionary, in the vague hope, as Mark Twain put it to the Interviewer, of treeing her in the appendix. But then Bradford was quite ready to be impressed. To Marion Craven she seemed a pretty, quiet, well-bred young woman, with a good deal of strength ready to show itself in the curves of the mouth some day; and Miss Craven was a much closer observer than Bradford was. She talked with them a moment, and then, like a tactful hostess, slipped away.

“I asked her to introduce me,” said Bradford, “because I thought in the hurry of the station the other night you probably didn’t notice my face, and might not remember me.”

“I remember you very well,” she answered.

“You live in Carfax?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Have you been coming out to Mrs. Craven’s

THE CHAMELEON

teas often? It's odd we haven't met. She is very good to me; she lets me ramble among the salted almonds as I please."

"I have never been here before."

Just out, Bradford fancied; she had probably been in boarding-school fifteen months before, when he had left Carfax. He dredged his brain for something admirable to say, but brought up only commonplaces, which he hesitated to offer her. The more he looked at her, the more he was inclined to believe that America had found a way to abrogate the laws of heredity. She was no more like her mountainous uncle than a pearl is like a brick. She seemed not to mind the silence, and they sat quietly a moment. Across the room that uncle was holding sonorous conversation with Dr. Craven, and the words came to their ears with no diminution of force.

"Expansion is the motto of the country," they heard him say. "Everything is branching out. We need to follow the rule of the times. Why should Carfax young men go away from Carfax to study law or medicine or theology? Young men from the outside ought to be coming here for

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

those branches. Carfax is the centre of the country's manufacturing, in some lines at least"—he was thinking of the pickle business, reflected Bradford, cynically—"why shouldn't we make it the centre of the country in education as well?" He squared his shoulders till the president was hidden from view, and the "we" seemed to represent only Murdoch's massiveness. Probably the President made some reply, but it failed to reach Bradford and Miss Power.

"Your uncle makes himself heard, doesn't he?" ventured Bradford.

"Such men as that," a voice cried in his ear, "are the curse of America. They are raw materialism. They have no ideals, because ideals have no price on the stock-exchange." Miss Mangler stood before them.

"Miss Mangler—present Miss Power," murmured Bradford, gently. Never before had he welcomed the coming of The Curse.

"You were speaking of my uncle?" inquired Miss Power, indifferently. Miss Mangler heard, looked, comprehended, gasped, and fled. Bradford chuckled.

THE CHAMELEON

"You did that beautifully," he commented.

"She seems a foolish woman," said Miss Power. Bradford could have applauded her serenity. He was growing surer every moment that this diamond was not paste.

"At any rate," he said, "I am glad you remembered me."

She smiled slowly. "For two days? I shall remember you longer than that, Mr. Bradford. It is you who have forgotten that I heard you sing."

"You have remembered that, too?"

"Yes."

"It is odd," said Bradford, irrelevantly, "that Mr. Murdoch should be your uncle."

"Why?"

"I don't know why," he confessed, foolishly. He stared from her fresh young beauty to Murdoch. Alas for him! the pickle-maker caught his glance, and came over. He seized Bradford's hand with so loud an expression of good-will that it might almost have been called a cheer. "Ha! It's young Bradford! Well, this is agreeable."

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Murdoch," answered

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

Bradford, uneasily. He felt somehow effaced—rubbed away.

“How’s all with you?” inquired Murdoch, with cheerful heartiness. “Been in any more wrecks, eh? You’ve discovered Amy, I see. She has talked enough about you the last day or two. I got jealous finally. I said, ‘Look here, I pulled two or three out myself; give me a little credit, won’t you? But it didn’t do a bit of good.’”

Bradford dared to glance at Amy. To his surprise, she was regarding him without a touch of embarrassment; looking at him, he fancied, indignantly, as if he had been a giraffe, or a calf with two heads, or any other object of legitimate curiosity. She was sitting in judgment on him, he fancied. Uncle or no uncle, she saw this man’s innate vulgarity as clearly as he did, and saw, too, that he did not know how to repel it. Bradford pulled himself together.

“I congratulate you on your election to the board of trustees, Mr. Murdoch,” he said.

“Eh? What? Oh—thank you, thank you. Yes, I’m to be a new broom. I may have a little sweeping to do; I don’t know. By the way—have

THE CHAMELEON

you heard from Barrett, Barrett and Cooper yet? ”

“ Yes. I had their letter this morning.” It was no use, thought Bradford, bitterly, to divert the attacks of this behemoth; he patronized and exhibited others just as he patronized and exhibited himself. He dragged everything into garish light, and pointed to it, lest somebody should miss it. Bradford resolved instantly to throw Barrett, Barrett and Cooper to the winds before he would be indebted to a fellow like that. Murdoch would advertise him as he did the pickles—“ our own manufacture ”—the Murdoch brand would be on him.

“ I thought you would. Now, if you can argue a case as well as you can sing—” he turned to the nucleus of a group which his prominence had collected. “ Ever hear Mr. Bradford sing? ” he demanded; and then, laying his hand on Bradford’s shoulder, he described the events of the wreck; Bradford with a half-pleased, half-indifferent smile—the smile he thought he ought to wear—upon his lips, and shame gnawing at his heart.

“ Stood there like an archangel—like an arch-

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

angel," the pickle-maker cried. "I've heard good singing, but I tell you I never heard singing like that before."

"I hoped that perhaps Mr. Bradford would sing for us, as he used to do," said Mrs. Craven's quiet voice behind him.

"No, no," he began.

"But yes, yes," interrupted Murdoch. "Go on, young man; you haven't any right to deprive us of it."

The chorus about him urged him on—a chorus he could not help believing ironical; for he would have begged ironically under similar circumstances, and when do we ever judge others save by ourselves? Not, at least, until we are older and wiser than Bradford was.

"I'm afraid my voice will prove that Mr. Murdoch is a bad judge of singing," he protested.

"Please sing, Mr. Bradford." Miss Power somehow impressed him with her sincerity. He had often sung to Marion Craven's accompaniment. Now he chose from her music a little song of Nevins's—"Dites-moi, belle enchanteresse"—and she played while he sang it. Out of the cor-

THE CHAMELEON

ner of his eye he glanced at Miss Power. She was sitting, her face turned directly toward him, her hands folded quietly in her lap, given up to the music and forgetful of everything else around her. What a blissful unconsciousness of self! he thought. And he sang tenderly, caressingly. The tinkle of teaspoons stopped entirely, and he knew that he held the company. Then he played with them, as he loved to do—made them smile and frown and sigh as he chose. And as he sang on, he forgave Murdoch—for undoubtedly the pickle-maker meant well, if he were clumsy as a hippopotamus in showing it; he forgot that he had intended to refuse Murdoch's offer. What he remembered was that everyone in the room was thinking of him and his song. He smiled with the pleasure of it, letting his voice wander softly through the notes, stealing a look now and then at the little girl in gray, till he almost fancied that he was singing to her only, and she knew it, and would answer when he finished. He ceased abruptly. After a moment, people moved restlessly, as those do who are gently waked, and two or three tried to tell him of their enjoyment. But he

THE PRESIDENT AND AMY

put them aside, and went confidently to Miss Power.

“ Did you like it? ” he asked, under his breath.

“ Very much,” she answered, quietly. It affected Bradford as cold water would have.

Chapter Seven

ENTER CLARGES

Barrett, Barrett and Cooper spread their law-offices over the top floor of the Galton building. To have office room at all in the Galton building is a certificate of character. Galton's is almost the smallest of the structures which have made Carfax celebrated. It has been said that merchants in Carfax have no chance of seeing into heaven except from the tops of their own buildings; and there are architectural monstrosities which climb to such a lofty height that the statement is given point. But the Galton building is low—five stories in all. Old man Galton made a fortune in plumbers' supplies. He was a whimsical old Scotchman, of the kind who save heroically until they are ready to spend, then spend, with equal heroism, to suit themselves. He determined to erect a building of a sort new to Carfax.

ENTER CLARGES

“We’ll have na cheap-johns in the place,” he observed to his architect. “Ma buildin’ll hoose only the honest men o’ Carfax, and man, we’ll mak it sma’ accordin’.” Small it was made; high of rent; it is always full, too, in spite of the old man’s jest, and in spite of the rigid examination into business antecedents which every new applicant for space must undergo. The untried lawyer and the surgeon who has yet to flesh his instruments are ruled out of Galton’s as sternly as the promoter is, and men of all sorts whose mercantile or professional morality will not stand investigation. Consequently an office in Galton’s is better than standing in Bradstreet’s.

Perhaps the perfection of its cleanliness, the modernity of its elevators, the precise completeness of its whole equipment have as much to do with filling Galton’s as the desire a man has to be known by the company he keeps. Certainly Alexander Galton was no jerry-builder. The architect ventured to point out that in various fashions money might be unostentatiously saved here and there, but Galton shook his head serenely.

“I’ll be gettin’ ma sax per centum yet,” said

THE CHAMELEON

he, "an' as for the rest, I'll gie it up for the preevelege of bein' oreiginal." Which he did, and went to his reward well content, apparently.

You entered Galton's by two great doors which swung easily and noiselessly on pivots, into a central court paved with gray marble in small squares. A bronze statue of the old man, in a frock coat, with every wrinkle of his Caledonian face present at the roll-call, ornamented the centre of the court, and the names of Galton's tenants were arranged upon the pedestal. Galton lay underneath. "Ay, man, put me there," he said, "with honest men all around me; 'twill be a treat to me I'm no so used to have in Carfax." Gray marble stairs, made broad and easy, climbed quadrilaterally about the court, and slow, silent, comfortable elevators were ranged on one side. By one of these you were carried to the fifth floor, if your errand was to Barrett, Barrett and Cooper's.

Their offices take up three sides of the square. You behold a door beneath the comforting legend, blazoned in gilt, "WALK IN," and find yourself part of a large room. It is panelled in redwood,

ENTER CLARGES

a redwood bench runs round two sides of the polished floor, and beyond is a Japanese railing. There sits an attendant in a dark-red uniform, an urbane and courteous young man always, not to be irritated or discomposed. He places your name in a tiny redwood box and releases a spring, whereupon the redwood box disappears. When it returns, if you are permitted to pass the railing, you go through a solid and smoothly swinging door, to find yourself in another ante-room, redwood like the first, but smaller, and furnished with chairs instead of a bench. Through one door of this room, if it chances to stand ajar, you may see into a very large apartment, occupied by numerous desks. This is the famous Heaven which the Trinity rule over; the room of the young men of Barrett, Barrett and Cooper; the room to which Bradford was admitted by virtue of the pickle-maker's favor. A desk in this room was held to insure a man's future, if he had the stuff in him. Next to the door of Heaven another door allowed entrance—to the offices of the firm? Not at all; to the offices of their private secretaries. Beyond that, however, at last, was a hallway, from which

THE CHAMELEON

you were received into the sancta of (1) Barrett Junior, (2) Old Tom Cooper, (3) Barrett Senior—the Carfax Trinity.

And when you went out? This ultimate hallway ended in a door which opened from the inside only. Passing through, you found yourself before the elevators again; you had gone round three sides of a square, and you were close enough to touch, if you were so minded, that beautifully gilded sign which hospitably urged you to “WALK IN.”

So Bradford explained it to the Residuum on the evening after the Craven’s tea. He smoked meditatively as he estimated the partners.

“I didn’t much care about ‘Son’—young Barrett, that is. He has a black little, spiky little beard, and a black spiky eye like a tack, to match. But the old gentleman is wonderful. I wish you could see him, Shedsy. I was called into his office, of course, to be exhorted. After all those barriers and fortifications, what sort of a man would you naturally expect?—a snaky-headed dragon with a Medusa glare was about what I was looking for. My knees wobbled as I walked, and I muttered

ENTER CLARGES

prayers. Behold a white-haired, clean-shaven, pink-cheeked, blue-eyed old boy, like Friar Tuck, only not fat; complexion like a girl's; and a sense of humor that must be fatal to the business. He talked to me like a father; told me a long story to illustrate the ways in which I could help out the firm. You see we are all on salary, and any business we get goes to the firm's exchequer. He said that forty years ago he began just as we were beginning now. He used to be sent with blanks, and briefs, and so on, to the printer's, and he got to be a friend of the printer's and secured his confidence. So, in a few weeks, Mr. Printer gave him some bills to collect—old dead dogs, that no man in his senses would expect to get the money out of. But Barrett said he hammered away at them, in season and out of season. One of them was for thirty dollars, against a contractor named McGuirk, who came to see Barrett, said he couldn't pay that or any other of his bills anyway, and asked what it would cost to put him into bankruptcy. Barrett knew as much about putting a man into bankruptcy as a hen does about swimming-lessons; so he looked wise, and said he'd do

THE CHAMELEON

the job for seventy-five dollars. McGuirk snapped him up. Barrett put in the night in the calfskin library, and next day he was ready for anything. He bankrupted McGuirk, drew the seventy-five, gave thirty of it to the printer, and turned in forty-five to the firm. The contractor swore by him, and so did the printer. They brought him some more business, and of course he turned that into the firm too. Presently the firm—it was Randolph and Eastman in those days—called him into the office.

“ ‘ Mr. Barrett,’ says Randolph, ‘ how much are we giving you? ’

“ ‘ Fifty dollars a month,’ says Barrett.

“ ‘ And you have been with us? ’

“ ‘ Ten months, sir.’

“ ‘ I find,’ says Randolph, ‘ that you have turned in, in that time, six hundred and forty dollars in fees.’

“ ‘ Yes, sir,’ says Barrett, wondering what was coming, but bracing himself to bear it, even if it was a full partnership.

“ ‘ H’m, h’m,’ says old Randolph, nodding at him. ‘ Under those circumstances—under those

ENTER CLARGES

circumstances, we have decided to—make your salary—thirty dollars.’

“ ‘In that case,’ says Barrett, very blank, you may be sure, ‘I’ll——’

“ ‘A week,’ continues Randolph, placidly. ’

“ ‘Be much obliged to you,’ finishes Barrett, with a rush.

“ ‘Very well, sir,’ answers Randolph, without a twinkle. ‘I have only one suggestion, Mr. Barrett; a verdict should not be rendered until the evidence is all in.’ A year later they made him a junior partner. ‘And now,’ he told me this afternoon, ‘I have nothing to do but sit here and tell this story to young men. I have told it to forty-five already; you are the forty-sixth. Go thou and do likewise.’ ”

“He must be a Nonesuch,” said Shedsy. “I sh-shall recommend to our firm that we do b-busi-ness with him.”

“What is Cooper like, Frank? ”

“All the rest of the firm,” answered Bradford, “make me think of overcoats and heavy frosts. I haven’t seen Cooper at all. They say no one ever does, at the office. Cooper is the firm’s con-

THE CHAMELEON

nection with society; he's the man who gets them all the swell divorce suits."

"What p-puzzles the Court is to understand h-how your valuable services g-got recognition, Frank. If Barrett And-so-forth had known you as long as that g-good fortune has been vouchsafed to us, I c-could easily see through it; but not at all. You reach these sh-shores from Europe's happier clime, and b-behold a menial domestic bearing a note upon a silver salver, who awaits y-your arrival. The best firm of lawyers in Carfax will be d-desolated unless you can spare them the loan of your talents. Luck, luck, luck! You have my Lady Luck h-hypnotized to a f-finish, Frank."

"Yes, I think I must have," answered Bradford, gayly. "Pray for me that she doesn't go back on me, Shedsy. But this wasn't luck altogether. Do you remember the large and genial pickle-manufacturer I was telling you about—Murdoch?"

"The one with a p-paste-diamond niece?"

"The one I was telling you about—yes," replied Bradford, hurriedly. "Well, he spoke a

ENTER CLARGES

good word for me; he liked my singing, so he thought I must be a good lawyer."

"He got you in there?"

Bradford nodded.

Shedsy shrieked with laughter. "L-lucky he didn't hear your remarks," he cried. "Aren't you re-repenting in sackcloth and ashes, though, Frankie?"

Bradford reddened. He had begun to feel a superior kind of friendship for Murdoch, but he was not ready to acknowledge obligation. That last is not true, either; he was ready to acknowledge obligation, but not to have the obligation admitted by other people. For the first time since his return he began to wonder whether business was not changing Shedsy for the worse—destroying a little of his old-time delicacy of feeling. But the unconscious Shedsy lay on his back on the couch, and lifted his heels comfortably into the air.

"There is an innocuous intellectual exercise which s-some call a game," he announced. "What s-say you, merry men of the Residuum; does d-deep call unto d-deep—Whist?" He smoked in joyous puffs. "Oh comfort, comfort scorned of

THE CHAMELEON

d-devils of boarding-house keepers! Life l-looks bright at last."

"Not any whist for me," said Kate. "I must go over to Dr. Craven's."

"I've an errand into the world too. I must go down and see Mr. Murdoch."

"L-look out for the paste-diamond," murmured Shedsy.

"Shut up, Shedsy," said Kate, good-humoredly. Shedsy looked up quickly at Bradford, who was staring uneasily at the stolen steins on the mantelpiece, his face still flushed a little. A look of wonder, and almost of sorrow, came into Shedsy's round blue eyes.

"F-Frank," he said, in a moment, in a tone of abstraction, "they s-say that your p-pickle-maker is going to introduce the methods of the sh-shop into the university. They say mine alma m-mater is going to be run on b-business principles. How about it?"

"It's about time," said Bradford, starting up. "Come on, Kitty."

"Slim," said Shedsy, when the two were gone out, "do you think Kate meant anything?"

ENTER CLARGES

“ Meant anything? ”

“ By t-telling me to sh-shut up, just now? ”

“ I didn’t hear him,” answered Slim, seriously.

“ But I suppose,” he added, in a moment, “ you must have been making a noise, weren’t you? ”

“ No, I wasn’t,” snapped Shedsy. Even a momentary ill-humor was so rare with him that Slim looked up in astonishment. But Shedsy in turn was staring uneasily at those stolen steins; seeing, not them, but a face which might lie behind them—a face with Eyes, as Bradford called it. The Residuum was four days old, and poor Shedsy had begun to worry. But Eve entered Paradise on the day after its completion. Shedsy should have congratulated himself on having gained three days.

Kate and Bradford made their way to the car. That part of Carfax had a curious look to the stranger. It was all in the country when the college settled there, forty years and more ago. A farm-house, the rendezvous of duck-hunters in the sixties, still stands not above two hundred yards from the Carfax athletic field, in acres which are sadly shrunken, but grown very valuable now.

THE CHAMELEON

When Murdoch was in college the swells of Carfax College used to meet there twice a year for duck-feasts—spring and fall—in fond recollection of the feats of their fathers; and they would grow hilarious as they toasted the ghostly memory of the mallards. The proprietress no longer allows these riotous banquets; she is far along in years; she wears a black silk dress on week-days, and, some say, has a card with “Wednesday” on the lower left-hand corner—though no one is ever expected or ever comes. Now there are rows of cottonwoods and willows, gaunt as suburban trees always are, but still unvanquished; they keep guard over the high-stilted sidewalks. One needs to know the region well after dark, or he may find himself tumbled six feet or so into a ditch, and fortunate if he has no broken bones. The section produces more municipal damage suits than any other in Carfax. The city is always about to grade and repair, but never does—like a boy who grows so rapidly he cannot find time to mend the rips in his trousers. Carfax is spread well to the north of the college now, along the river-bank. Flats occasionally garnish the nearly vacant squares.

ENTER CLARGES

The casual college oarsman, toiling up against the current, beholds Irish ladies, in scanty garments, attending to the family wash or the family discipline, in unsavory rear areas, and he cries encouragingly, "Go it, Bridget! Go it, Mrs. Muldoon!" so that she stops to shake her red fist, impotent to seize him.

"Do you think, Frank," asked Kate, as they made their way along in the September half-darkness, "that this talk of Carfax College being turned into a university amounts to anything?"

"Yes, I do. It's bound to come. Carfax is getting too big to be content with a college."

"But the other plan takes money—and where's the money?"

"The money evolves, in a case like this. If we had a president who knew how to ask for it, we should have had the money long ago."

"Craven is the finest Greek scholar in the United States," said Kate, defiantly.

Bradford laughed. "What of it?" he asked, tolerantly. Kate was silent; the question struck home; the problem was stated in three words. Kate felt a singular sympathy with the old régime,

THE CHAMELEON

which, he reflected sadly, placed scholarship above buildings. Not for the first time he began to wonder if his own nature and feelings were out of date. He looked at his own carefully gloved hands; he felt the spring and quiver of his muscles under his light clothes, and the oddity of his own vocation in the light of the new Carfaxian ideals became apparent to him. A little loneliness—that loneliness of mind which besets the scholar sometimes—crept over him. He became aware of a rush of pity for Dr. Craven; but with it came an unreasoning anger also against the men who wanted expansion and extension. Kate's glove half-closed into a fist. He could have argued with a blow.

"I suppose you're right," he answered, bitterly.

"Yes, I'm right," answered Bradford. "Scholarship is what it always was, but it has nothing to do with organization, my son."

"I turn off here," said Kate, abruptly. "I'd wait, but I see your car is coming."

A maid took Bradford's card at Murdoch's, and ushered him, without preliminary announcement,

ENTER CLARGES

into a little sitting-room. There was a little square table in the middle, with a lamp, and beside it Amy Power, reading. She looked up as the door opened. Bradford saw her eyes. The beginning of love is as dateless as the beginning of reforms, otherwise one would say that Bradford's story began there.

"I came to see your uncle," he said, awkwardly, and cursed himself for the speech.

"I will tell him," she answered, rising.

"Don't go," he begged her. "It—it's nothing particular. I only came down to thank him for a kindness he did me."

"He is always doing people kindnesses, but not all of them thank him," she replied.

"This was an unusual kindness." He had not meant to tell her, but he found himself going on. "He has given me the ring of Opportunity, like a fairy godmother, don't you know?"

"Yes?"

He told her about Barrett, Barrett and Cooper.

"I know Mr. Barrett," she said. "The old gentleman, that is."

Bradford laughed. "He's a funny old chap,"

THE CHAMELEON

he said. "He told me a story about himself to-day—about a contractor, and a printer, and the first case he ever had. 'But we three came to very different ends,' said he. 'The printer is dead, the contractor is in the penitentiary, and I have nothing to do but tell this story to young men. You are the forty-sixth I have told it to.' It was amusing."

"I've heard the story," she smiled, "but I never knew that the contractor was in the penitentiary before."

Bradford felt a strong desire to bite his tongue out. Of course she would have heard the story—that, he might have known. And he would be extremely fortunate if she did not hunt that tale down, just from the naïve interest she had in her discovery. Bradford knew well enough the contractor was not in the penitentiary. It was his beastly luck, he reflected forlornly, to make a break like that at the very beginning of acquaintance-ship. However, he rushed on, feeling that he might blot out this detail. He might have airily intimated that he had put the contractor behind bars because the story seemed to need that touch, but

ENTER CLARGES

he felt instinctively that airy intimations of that sort would be unpopular with this particular young woman. So he piled up reminiscence after reminiscence, until his rapid talk seemed to have thoroughly interested her. He was again occasionally aware that he made too much of this detail or not enough of that—as when he told her of his shooting-scape in Fairfield, Wisconsin. He had not really struck the lumberman with a chair, nor, on the other hand, had he really dodged behind a friend when the man drew a revolver. But he was in a hurry, and her gray eyes were wide. Moreover, that was Bradford's way. He wanted his colors deep and cleanly contrasted; he had the instinct of the artist, it is true, but on the other hand, whether heroic or unheroic, he had to contrive somehow to be the central figure. Except in eyes, he had little use for gray; small care for punctilious accuracy, unless it served his purpose, when his meticulous memory stood close to his elbow. Besides, this girl was no prig, and to accuse her of priggish particularity in detail seemed disagreeable to him.

“I wish I could have seen it.”

“You would have screamed,” he laughed.

THE CHAMELEON

She shook her head slowly. "Were you really not hurt at all?" she questioned, after a moment.

"Just grazed; just so as to scar up my shoulder enough to show."

Her eyes involuntarily turned toward his shoulder, and were as quickly withdrawn, but not before Bradford with real pleasure recognized her interest. He thought with amused relief that it was lucky she could not see through his coat. After all, though there never had been a scar, it is true he had been missed very narrowly.

"I don't know why I tell you this story," he said, after an instant, hesitating. "You'll think me a frightful egotist. Really, though, I tell it to very few people. And I'd much rather you wouldn't mention it, if you please."

"My uncle said you would not give your name to the reporter the other night, after you sang." Her look rested on him with a young approval of the hero who was also modest. "So I certainly won't speak of this," she smiled. Bradford felt anything but heroic.

Murdoch came in then. A man was with him in

ENTER CLARGES

sacerdotal uniform. Bradford, who was accustomed to loosely costumed Congregationalists, or Methodist exhorters, who took off their coats to spread the gospel, took him for a priest. "My minister, Father Clarges," which was the introduction, did not serve for enlightenment. "My minister," who was a dark young man of thirty, shook hands carelessly. "Glad to meet you. I saw that you distinguished yourself the other night. Come here, Amy." He engaged her in low-voiced conversation at the end of the room, leaving Bradford to the tender mercies of Murdoch. Even the knowledge that priests are celibate did not wholly comfort Bradford, who did not glower at Father Clarges only because he did not dare.

"I didn't know you were a Catholic, sir," he remarked, under his breath.

"Catholic?" Murdoch laughed till the room was full of it. "Father, the young man takes you for a Catholic." Bradford writhed.

"It's a great church," the minister tossed them. "But it's not mine. I have bestowed blessings on people who thought it was, before this, however."

THE CHAMELEON

He went on talking to Amy, and Bradford apologized.

"That don't matter," Murdoch assured him. "I guess you pleased him. We're high, we are; so high we may fall over any day, now. I'm in it for Amy; she likes the singing. How's Barrett, Barrett and Cooper getting on?"

"I'm barely started. I went in to-day."

"You'll find them good men." Bradford began to thank him, but Murdoch waved him away. "Nonsense, young man. They'll be thanking me some day. You won't have much chance for afternoon teas, though. It's pull, pull—one foot after the other, and the top of the hill getting farther off every day, seems like. Say, do you like hills? Come up to my country place some time. It's northwest about eighty miles. *There* I've got hills—hills and trees, the best we can raise in this section. I won't have a foot of timber cut on my land till it's absolutely necessary. A tree's got more soul than most men; got as much soul as a dog, by the Lord Harry! It takes one of those pines of mine three hundred years to grow—three hundred years of snow and sunshine; head up,

ENTER CLARGES

heart clean all the time, till it gets to where it can see the world. And then do you think I'm going to let some whipper-snapper of a man come along with an axe and a saw and turn those three centuries into joists and firewood? No, sir; when God wants those trees down, he can *blow* 'em down." Thus the pickle-maker rambled on, thrusting possible gratitude farther away from him for a while, but gradually growing unconscious of anything but his own enthusiastic admiration for his pines.

"Of course, it's the associations of those trees that count," suggested Bradford.

"That's it, associations. What they've seen and outlived—that's the thing."

"And yet I've heard rumors—" Bradford stopped.

"Well, sir?"

"I've heard rumors that the associations you speak of are going to get a shock."

"How so? How so?"

"Not of the trees; but of something else that's seen quite a bit of life, too."

"What do you mean?"

"Carfax College."

THE CHAMELEON

“What do they say about Carfax College?”

“They say it may turn into a university, one of these days.”

“They do, do they?” The pickle-maker looked at Bradford keenly. “Now, Mr. Bradford, you let me tell you a story. I started in business in a small way, as maybe you know, and I hadn’t much of a plant—just one building, and it was out west of here about four miles. Well, I made money out there; and what’s more, I got to love the place. Seems mighty funny to a young fellow like you that anybody could love a pickle-factory, now don’t it? I went out to that old place every morning, pretty near, for six years. I knew every board in her, and every spot where the paint was off. It was mine, mine, don’t you see? Don’t you know that sensation, where you’ve done something d——d good—” Bradford glanced at the minister, but Murdoch never noticed. “Something you didn’t know whether you could do or not, and everybody said you couldn’t do? That was me. I was born to love or hate, you know; I never can do with half-way emotions. I never had a child, but I reckon I know what it would be to love one, just the

ENTER CLARGES

same. Mind you, I was going out to that old factory for years. I had a partner—third partner—fine a young fellow as ever was, but a bit conservative; he'd rather walk than run, even if he knew his road; that sort of man. Well, after a while I began to see that my old place was just about at the end of her usefulness to me. If I wanted to get on, I'd have to branch out. My, but I hated to think of breaking up and getting out! You won't believe that either, perhaps, but I did. But what was there to do? Things were moving; I had to move too."

"I see," said Bradford, as the pickle-maker paused.

"But that partner of mine," the big man resumed, musingly, "he couldn't look at it just as I did. He'd been working out there too; he was part of it; he felt toward it just as I did. Only he wasn't as sure as I was that it would pay to tear down and build bigger. I argued and argued, but I couldn't convince him, though I managed to make him believe I was in earnest finally. So I said to him one day, 'Sam,' I said, 'will you shoot, or will you give the old man the gun?' He

THE CHAMELEON

looked me right in the eye. I tell you he was a first-class young fellow. 'John,' says he, 'is it one or the other?' 'Yes, it is,' says I. 'Take the weapon, John,' says he, 'for I'll bet I never could hit your target.' And he drew out, and went on by himself, and he's doing well—fairly well. He spoke to me about it once, three years ago or so. 'I guess you hit the bull's-eye, John,' he said, 'but I'm not a bit sorry I kept off the range.' That was Sam; he knew his own mind."

"Good-night, Amy," said the minister, abruptly, and came over toward them, leaving Miss Power. "Murdoch, I must be going. Will you come along, Mr. Bradford?" He took a pipe from some mysterious pocket and filled it carefully. "Got a match? No? Then I must just use one of my own." He lit his pipe, puffing vigorously, and at some sign of disapprobation in Miss Power's eyes he smiled. "Never mind, Amy; I'll be gone in a minute. Come along, Mr. Bradford, if you've said good-night." Bradford allowed himself to be led away. It was too obvious that Clarges was privileged in Murdoch's house. Some men might have resisted, run the chance of making

ENTER CLARGES

themselves ridiculous, and ended by certain knowledge where Bradford possessed only uncertain fear.

“Fine night,” said the minister, contemplatively, when they were in the street. He smoked like an engine for two squares; neither said a word. “I turn off here; good-night, Mr. Bradford.” He nodded and was gone, leaving Bradford to two thoughts:

(1) Carfax College was likely to see a revolution.

(2) What was the exact relation of this free and easy minister, who was not a priest, to the Murdoch household, and particularly to Amy Power?

This second thought lasted Bradford all the way home—and after.

Chapter Eight

THE RULES OF THE GAME

“Carfax College,” said Bradford to Amy Power, “takes its football as a passion, not as an amusement.”

“But it is only a game, after all.”

“No; there you are wrong. It isn’t a game, it is an outlet for the feelings. Tennis is a game; horse-racing is a gamble; but football and bull-fighting are neither the one nor the other. In the Middle Ages, when the knight was in one mood he flew a falcon, and in another he smacked his neighbor over the head with a battle-axe. Nowadays, to express the same moods, we play golf or go to a football game, as the case may be. Watch the people, if you think they are here to see the teams play. After the game is over one side is jubilant and condescending, the other unhappy and ashamed. Yet both sides have done as well as

THE RULES OF THE GAME

they can. The fact is, of course, that winning and not playing well is their aim—which proves what I have just said. So long as the knight could smash his neighbor's skull, he cared very little whether he smashed it gracefully or ungracefully; in fact, one may say he didn't care at all. That's the way with us. Now and then you'll hear a man maintain that the temper and tone of the game are everything, and the accident of winning is nothing at all. Who agrees with him? The side that has been licked, every time. The winning side packs away any such theories in the camphor of conceit, for possible use next year."

"But," she protested, "I don't think I quite understand."

They two, in common with all Carfax, were at the Upton game, the game of the year. Bradford had known Miss Power for at least two months, in every day of which he thought of her, and would have given all he had to know that she was thinking of him. Poor Bradford! He had been used all his life to drop the acquaintance of girls who did not show him promptly that they enjoyed his company. If you wished Bradford to like you,

THE CHAMELEON

you must let him know that you liked him. Alas, he had found, by the irony of fate, a girl whose acquaintance he could not bring himself to drop, although she did not show she enjoyed his company at all. Did she? Sometimes it seemed impossible to him, she was so unmoved when he came; and yet she let him come, and listened closely to all he had to say, and seemed a little sorry when he went. He could have echoed her last remark; he did not quite understand.

As if in derision of that remark, a long sustained hiss ran about the crowd, and ended in a deep, guttural, angry, contemptuous "ah!" A slight pause followed, and then came the thunderous beat of the Carfax College yell. It rolled about them like a wave; and then broke into a foam of individual cries. "Bragg! Bragg! Bragg!" they shouted.

"Look there; that will explain it," spoke Bradford, his lip curling a trifle in amusement.

"What is it? What are they hissing for?"

"That man Bragg, whom they were just cheering, is one of the best players we have; he's a nice fellow, they say, but he has a nasty temper. The

THE RULES OF THE GAME

man on the other team tackled him foul a moment ago, and Bragg hit him. That is against the rules, and the umpire put Bragg out of the game, as football law requires him to do. You see the result—hisses for the craven umpire, cheers for the heroic Bragg.”

“Eloquently put,” said a voice behind him. “What a pity that the umpire saw him—isn’t it?” They turned; Father Clarges bowed, his dark eyes resting momentarily on Bradford—ironically, Bradford thought. “How are you, Amy? Is Mr. Bradford lamenting the regrettable absence of the true sporting spirit?”

Clarges’s remark was the most harmless possible, yet Bradford was instantaneously sure that the minister saw to the bottom of his heart. If not, whence rose the tone in Clarges’s voice, so glibly expressive of amusement? “Aha, Mr. Bradford; I see that you really don’t care a hang about sportsmanly ethics,” said that tone. “But the thing nowadays is to be a sportsman, and you wish to keep up with the leaders.” The exactness of Clarges’s insight amazed and frightened Bradford, who for a short time failed to reflect that after all

THE CHAMELEON

he did not really know whether Clarges fancied anything of the sort. But this reflection came to him presently, and he sneered a little at himself. He knew that ordinarily he would have cared very little whether or not Clarges penetrated his arcana. Bradford was always fancying that people had fathomed him; it gave him a pang for a moment, then he avoided those people in the future. But Amy Power was there, and Amy Power knew this dark-faced, saturnine young clergyman intimately, that was plain; and so Bradford was uneasy lest his real colors, or real lack of any colors, be revealed to her. He seized upon his customary resource, rapid talk, and with a skilful ignoring of Clarges expounded to Miss Power the merits of the game. Coincident with the dismissal of Bragg the half came to an end. Neither Carfax nor Upton had scored. Armed neutrality took the place of combat for a season. Bradford felt much as he imagined the Carfax eleven did. He, too, was engaged in a contest. He had a wholesome fear of his opponent. Only one thing he was sure of: Clarges and Amy were not engaged. Whether they were likely to be was another matter; not

THE RULES OF THE GAME

if he could prevent it, Bradford determined fiercely.

Amy was wearing gray again—gray furs and a little gray hat. The sweep of sunshine, falling from the west, dazzled her eyes so that she put up a gray muff to shade them. Below them, above them, across from them, surged the crowd, with that uneasy, slightly rocking motion so inevitable where many Americans are gathered together; it is the epitome of the nation's nervousness.

"See you again," remarked Father Clarges. "Must have a little constitutional." He made his way unconcernedly down among the people, who drew themselves out of his path, and looked up at him annoyed. He wore no overcoat, though the wind was brisk. Soon they saw him stop to light his pipe; then he strolled away.

"Curious chap," said Bradford. He tried hard to keep his voice even. He felt impelled to say something of Clarges. It is certain that in the spring-time the song of the longing male robin concerns the other intrusive suitors. "I thought he was a mission clergyman, at first."

"No," answered Amy, "he has our church. It is very large—and rich."

THE CHAMELEON

“Did you notice his unconsciousness?” asked Bradford, speaking lightly. “That’s a great trait, don’t you think? When he went down just now—did you see? He paid no attention to anybody; what he wanted was to get his pipe lighted. That’s the kind of man who succeeds. We get our toes trodden on, but we admire in the end.”

“Do you think so?”

Bradford knew very well that he liked Amy Power against his will. He confessed it miserably to himself sometimes. For instance, such remarks as her last, without a particle of inflection whereby he might guess what she really meant, annoyed him horribly. He was aware that, under such annoyance, his custom was to flash back something, careless whether it wounded or not, and betake himself to more congenial company. Now he suffered, but he stayed; and knew that he wanted to stay; and cursed himself for wanting to stay.

“Yes,” he answered. “Individualism is all that makes the world go round. You can call it selfishness, or you can call it concentration, just as you please, but a man must be mindful of himself and unmindful of others, if he is to get on. He’s

THE RULES OF THE GAME

here to be interested in what he himself is doing. That is the spirit which in war we call Napoleon, and in literature, Shakespeare; Sir Isaac Newton had it and discovered the law of gravitation, Columbus had it and discovered America, Nero had it and lent Christianity just the impetus it wanted, and Father Clarges—" he broke off and laughed. He was doing a contemptible thing and he knew it.

"I don't think you really believe all that," she answered, looking at him with a puzzled light in her eyes. He laughed again defiantly, then more softly. At least he had interested her. "Well, perhaps I don't," he confessed. They dropped the subject. He was conscious that he had told Amy Power of his own dislike for Clarges; had spoken ill of Clarges—which all the laws of honor forbade a man in his circumstances to do. But his chief concern was—what did she think? And again he would have given all he had to know.

"See old Carhart," he exclaimed, presently. "He's the queerest fish in the basket, Miss Power. Do you know that he knows the name, age, height, and weight of every player who ever wore the Car-

THE CHAMELEON

fax green? If you give him time, he'll tell them all to you, and tell you just what every one is doing now. The night I met you, at Craven's—do you remember?—I asked him, as you came in with your uncle, whether he knew Mr. Murdoch. 'Murdoch?' said he. 'Yes; he played left guard three years; he was twenty-seven his senior year, six feet three, weighed two hundred and twelve.' How's that for accuracy, Miss Power?"

She laughed her slow little laugh. "Uncle will be glad to get those details, if I can remember them," she said. "He's very proud of his football, but I'm afraid he's forgotten those things. Will you tell them to me again?"

Bradford, reduced to the necessity of saying that he was not *quite* certain they were accurate, was floundering the least bit, when Clarges returned. The intermission was over; the game was on. Bradford had an uncomfortable feeling that in the game *he* was playing he had to some extent violated the rules.

Yes, the game was on; and a cry went up from a dozen keen-eyed watchers in the front row. "Bragg! Bragg! Bragg!" It grew in volume,

THE RULES OF THE GAME

and was tossed up and down, growing still, till it ended in one vast, inarticulate roar of joy.

“What is it?” cried Amy, her eyes shining with excitement.

“Why—why—” said Bradford, doubtfully, “it seems to me—yet it can’t be—it *is*—Bragg is back in the game! Bragg! Bragg! We have a chance now.”

“But the ethics?” Clarges’s face was inscrutable.

“Ethics?” snapped Bradford. “The umpire put the man out; if he found that he did him an injustice he can put him in again, can’t he?”

“Not according to the rules, I believe.”

“The half was up as Bragg was put out; there was no more playing. If the umpire chooses to rule that he was wrong to disqualify the man, it is his own business.”

“True,” responded Clarges. “But I believe we are accessories after the fact.”

Amy continued to watch the game; whether she understood the bearing of the conversation it would be difficult to say.

It sometimes happens that when two teams are

THE CHAMELEON

very evenly matched a single slight matter will be enough to turn the scale completely. It seems as if the balance, when pulled just a little, tips more and more of its own weight, so that in the end it has dipped away down. It happened so now. Carfax, which had despaired of winning without Bragg, was restored to complete confidence when it had him back. Upton was massacred. The final score was twenty-four to nothing. And Carfax went crazy; the air was thick with banners; long files of men wavered, shouting, in and out and up and down the field, while the poor Uptonians hung their heads and disappeared, miserably content if they might escape without attracting attention.

“Tell me,” said Amy, “I don’t know the rules, you see—tell me, was this man, Mr. Bragg, taken back according to rule?”

“It’s hard to say. A man who has been taken out can’t go in again. But the officials may have agreed that the half was really over before Bragg was put out; and in that case——”

“Yes?”

“In that case, technically, he may be said not to

THE RULES OF THE GAME

have been put out at all, and to have a perfect right to play on."

"Technically? But what do you really think?"

Bradford laughed. "I think we won the game," he said.

Clarges smiled. "Facts are more blessed than much theory," he said. "Good-night, Amy. I'm sorry there are so few supporters of your ethics in Carfax, Mr. Bradford." He touched his cap and was gone into the crowd. Amy's eyes followed him questioningly. Did she want him back? Bradford would have liked to strike him. Do not think the worse of Bradford; he did not show his desire. And if our own secret inclinations were habitually apparent to the world, we should stand lower, most of us, than we do, by just the distance that savagery stands below civilization. The years have taught us nothing but concealment.

.

"Didn't I see you with Miss Murdoch at the game, Frank?"

"Her name is Power, Shedsy."

"She's a s-stunner. But whoso t-touches fire is liable to be scorched, Frank."

THE CHAMELEON

“She’s no fire, Shedsy; she’s snow; cool, pure——”

“Are you fellows going to the m-mass-meeting?”

“I’m going, but not with you; I make part of the fringe, with Dr. Craven,” said Kate. Shedsy glanced up at him, but answered only

“You’ll go, Frank?”

Bradford knew from experience that Carfax mass-meetings, after a big game won, were worth attendance. The students took them seriously. Bradford could remember the days when he had been lifted up and borne about on young shoulders, while he clung to any convenient hair, and rejoiced to be the centre of it all.

To-night across the Carfax quadrangles the howl drifted—not the strong, sonorous cheer, but the faint, indiscriminate, unblended shriek which said, “Here we are! We have won, won, won, and we mean to let you know it.” Snatches of unintelligible songs reached them down the wind. As they approached, the glare of the fire against the dormitory windows met them first, red as blood; then, as they rounded a corner, they saw the fire

THE RULES OF THE GAME

itself, the centre of a thousand dancing, shrieking, destructive students of the liberal arts and the sciences, who were celebrating the one thing which man will continue to celebrate until Culture, with its last delicate touch, shall snick his arteries and let out his blood. They were celebrating the triumph of brain *and* body.

“Looks like hell and the devils, doesn’t it?” said Slim.

By the fire, not too close, but still broad in the glare, stood a big hay-wagon, in which the sheepish but happy eleven had been hauled to the scene; some of them were still in it, but most had escaped. In it stood also one William West, master of ceremonies, who from time to time introduced certain students who essayed to address the mob of dervishes around; the joyful dervishes mocking thereat. Beyond, on the edge of darkness, stood the spectators of the scene—townspeople, faculty, and maidservants.

“Boys,” cried the stentorian voice of West, “it is said that some in this vast assemblage are unacquainted with the score of to-day’s game. Will you enlighten them?”

THE CHAMELEON

They counted in unison. "One, two, three, four, five. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty. Twenty-one! Twenty-two!! Twenty-three!!! Twenty-four!!!!" And then the powerful Carfax cheer.

"Who is Billy West?" cried a voice in the crowd.

"Who, indeed?" came a squeak from somewhere. There was a roar, and West blushed in the fire-light.

"I have the honor, gentlemen and ladies—"

"Nine rahs for the ladies! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Ladies!"

"—gentlemen and ladies, to present Mr. Richard Brown, who will——"

"Dick, Dick, we—want—Dick! Dick, Dick, we—want—Dick!" The staccato applause rose, drowning everything else. Mr. Brown, very neatly dressed, and with a perfunctory smile, advanced to the end of the wagon. Alas for him; he wore a light waistcoat, and they would not let him begin.

"Remove the vest! Oh-h, Dick, remove the vest!"

"Remove the smile! Oh-h, Dick, remove the smile!"

THE RULES OF THE GAME

"If your sweetheart could see you now, Dicky dear!"

"Dicky by any other name would smell as sweet——"

At last he found a lull. "Fellows, I only want to say——"

"Say it!"

"Spit it out, Dick."

"Let us know your mind, old man."

"I only wanted to say, Three cheers for Carfax!" And the crowd roared forth the three, and three more to keep them company, and still three for good measure; and Brown descended and Green took his place; and the endless whirling farce went on, while the fire blazed high in the air, and shoved the people back and back, like a huge red-haired policeman, as its heat increased, and its light threw their faces into ghastly white relief.

"Much the same thing as ours used to be," said Bradford to Barnes, "only I think we made a little more noise, perhaps. And there is nobody here now like Pudding Thomas to make the crowd laugh."

"True, O King!"

THE CHAMELEON

“It makes me melancholy, though,” went on Bradford. “Et ego in Arcadia vixi; d——d smoky Arcadia, but I’m sorry to be out of it so soon!” He sighed.

“Go, then, my son, and h-howl among the h-howlers.”

“They don’t know me any more, Shedsy; they’d put me out.”

Shedsy chuckled to himself. Then he slipped away a moment into the darkness.

“I am informed,” thundered the master of ceremonies a few minutes later, “that Francis Howell Bradford, ninety-blank, hero of the Carfax and Albans wreck at Hoopsboro, is in the audience. Will Mr. Bradford come forward or would he prefer to be brought?”

“Here he is,” shouted Shedsy, seizing him, while others took up the cry. Bradford resisted, but faintly; presently he was in the wagon, facing the crowd, as he had often been years before. The suddenness of it, however, was a trifle surprising. From the wagon the fire-lit area appeared smaller, the faces more ghastly in the glare, the ring of darkness more sharply cut.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

“Gentlemen, Mr. Bradford; Mr. Bradford, gentlemen,” trumpeted West. There was an explosion of cheers, and then—silence.

It shut down around them so unexpected and so profound that the crackling of the fire seemed to amazingly increase, and became like innumerable pistol-shots in a high wind. Bradford stood there, facing them all, in his element; at ease, and completely happy.

“Sing!” cried a voice. Bradford held up his hand.

“Join in the chorus, boys.” His voice found even the limit of the crowd, where the wives of the professors stood. He sang them the old marching-song, as he had sung it years before, and they joined in the chorus crashingly, till the snapping fire wavered so it almost seemed the stars were wavering too.

Walk around, boys, walk around!

Walk around, boys, walk around!

*Hit her up a little, boys, hit her up a little, boys, hit her
up a little, boys,*

Walk around!

Drink her down, boys, drink her down!

Drink her down, boys, drink her down!

THE CHAMELEON

*Drink her down to Carfax, drink her down to Carfax, drink
her down to Carfax,*

Drink her down!

*So here's to you and here's to me, and here's to Carfax, that
makes three,*

And you never will discover a finer trinity,

So drink her down. Walk around!

He still stood in the wagon, and at the end of the final chorus, suddenly that extraordinary, expectant silence fell again—something tangible; the silence of curiosity. Then Bradford leaned forward and began to speak. As he waited for the chorus to finish, the thought had come to him and set his pulses beating. Looking away into the darkness, he saw, as plainly as if it had been in reality there, the dark face of the priest, with the tiniest trifle of an ironical sneer; and he saw, too, a face with gray eyes. What was this clamorous crowd to Bradford? Only the stage and the audience. The joy-light, the battle-light, flickered unseen in Bradford's eyes; he felt the racing blood in his veins, and braced himself for what he was to do. He would prove to Clarges——

“Boys! Fellows of Carfax! Most of you don't know who I am——”

THE RULES OF THE GAME

“Oh-h, yes, we do!”

“Only that I’m an old glee-club man who wanted a chance to air his voice. But I’m a Carfax man all right; I have the credentials in my trunk. I see Dr. Craven out there; he used to shake dice every Saturday afternoon for four years to see whether I got through or not; but the dice fell my way—somebody had loaded them—and I came through.” He dropped his voice a trifle. “And you don’t know—though you will when you’ve been out four years, as I have—what old Carfax is to me. Well—that’s all right, you think; but this meeting isn’t an autograph album for me to write a sentiment in. So there’s only one thing I want to say. It’s a strong thing, and I’m afraid you’ll think it’s an ungrateful thing; but I believe it’s a right thing, and so, strong and ungrateful if it be, I want to say it. I have been thinking about it all the evening. Understand this first: I make no reflections on the attitude of any man here. I state my own feelings merely. And it is this: Jimmy Bragg should never have been allowed to go back into that game to-day.”

There was a silence then! Not a single spurting

THE CHAMELEON

cheer; not a groan; not a sound. Every person there was listening.

“He is a player whose skill needs no words of mine to praise,” hurried on Bradford intensely. “He is a man who is justly popular wherever he is known. The umpire himself, in reinstating him, admitted that he had been unjustly taken out. But, fellows, to put a man back is against the rules of the game! To take advantage of a technicality is against the spirit of the game! You say, perhaps, it is the umpire’s business, and that is true; but it is our business also—your business, and my business, as square men and lovers of square, clean sport. You see by the score we could have won anyway. We had them beaten in that second half. Well, we have the victory now; the banner is floating over us; but, fellows, what would you give to have it floating there—without the stain!”

Still there was dead silence. In the same unnatural quiet Bradford bowed, easily and gracefully; his face was flushed but unexcited. The clapping of a single pair of hands fell upon their ears, and everybody turned. Dr. Craven’s white beard was plain to be seen; standing tall in the

THE RULES OF THE GAME

firelight, he was clapping heartily. One and another, here and there, took it up, but only a few. And Bradford got down from the wagon and crossed the firelit space; and all the way his blood was racing, and his eyes were shining, and he was thinking,

“I did it! I did it! I did it!” His steps kept time.

Shedsy seized him by the arm. “R-raving good, oh, r-raving good, Frank! You’re just exactly right! I f-felt that way, too, but I didn’t know h-how to say it. It was fine!”

Bradford gripped his hand. His voice was restrained and tense.

“A man has to speak sometimes, when his heart is full, Shedsy!”

Chapter Nine

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

The breakfast room at Murdoch's was small and almost as simply furnished as the dining-room of the Residuum, but the simplicity was that of costliness. Anyone may gain a reputation for taste nowadays if he goes to the right shop, as Murdoch made a habit of doing. The room was six-sided, and panelled nearly to the frieze with silver birch. The three windows all looked out upon the lawn, one to the east, two to the south. Opposite, fastened to the space above the panelling by some invisible contrivance, hung three pictures, all water-colors, and all of Murdoch's woods and river "up north."

Murdoch's face appeared suddenly from a cloud of Sunday newspaper. "Amy," he asked, "did you go to the football game yesterday with young Bradford?"

"Yes, Uncle."

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

“Have a good time?”

“Oh, yes.” She might have answered as enthusiastically had he asked her if she liked chocolates, or whether it was a fine day.

“That’s a nice boy,” consented Murdoch, beginning to smile. “Say, Amy, when I think of him singing away that night, I love him; I really do.”

“What makes you think of him now?” she asked.

“Oh—here’s something about him in the paper. He’s been distinguishing himself again, but he seems to have made sort of a mess of it this time. I’ll back him to be right, though. All he needs to learn is that there’s a time to tell the truth, and a time to——”

“To lie, Uncle Jack?”

The pickle-maker laughed his big laugh, got up, and tossed her the sheet. “Not a bit of it; a time to keep still, that’s all. Here; you see. By the way, you’ll have to go to church for both of us, girly—I’m busy this morning. You may have a surprise before long—you and Carfax. I’m not saying anything definite, but I tell you maybe. I hope you’ll like it when it comes. Say, Amy?”

THE CHAMELEON

“ Yes? ”

“ I’m all the father and mother you’ve got, you know. Is there anything you want that you haven’t got? ”

“ Nothing that you can give me, Uncle Jack.”

“ Try me and see.”

“ Well,” she said, considering, “ I wish I had a quicker way of drying my hair, it’s so thick.” She looked at him gravely. “ Nothing else.”

“ That stumps me,” he admitted. “ But, Amy—you know I care about you, don’t you? ”

“ Yes, dear,” she answered, a trifle surprised.

“ You know that whatever I do I’ll be thinking about you, don’t you? ”

Amy’s caresses were very rare. Now she put her hand on his, while he stood by her. “ Yes, dear,” she said again, and his face cleared. When he had gone, she wondered what was bothering him; he was seldom so serious. The thought crossed her mind that he might have made some mistake in the business—“ the business ” was quite vague and formless to Amy—and she looked after him affectionately. In a moment she took up the paper, and read the account of Bradford’s speech

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

at the mass-meeting. His position was very plainly sneered at by whoever had written the article; she could catch the contempt even through the veil of technicalities which obscured it. She read the bit over two or three times. Then she nodded decisively, put her elbows on the table and her chin in her hands, and stared for some time across the breakfast-china.

Afterward she muffled herself in her furs, and went to church. She was a very constant church-goer. St. Hilda's is a curious structure to the casual and uninitiated stranger. It is very long, very high, very narrow, very white. There are altars, little and big; mysterious doors, whence unexpected chanting processions issue; and a profusion of well-meant mortuary adornment. The acoustics are so bad that Father Clarges has hung over the lectern an old-fashioned, ungilded sounding board, which seems almost the one touch of solidity among the filigree of St. Hilda's.

Clarges never read his ten-minute sermons, but delivered them with a straightforward spontaneity. Christ, in a crimson robe, blessed the kneeling John in a stained-glass window behind him; and on sunny

THE CHAMELEON

Sundays a shaft of crimson, striking down across the minister's shoulder, splashed his hands red as he laid them flat before him on the gilded railing. His clean-shaven lips were almost gloomy as he urged upon his congregation the necessity of sincerity. The sharp little sentences flashed in and out like so many needles.

“Sincerity is life. Insincerity is death. One is growth and flow; the other decay and stagnation. Half a loaf is worse than no bread; and just so half a heart is worse than no heart. Say what you mean; be what you are. The religion of Christ began in a small country and among a humble folk. It spread till it filled the whole world. Why? Because the men who believed in it believed in it sincerely; preached it whole-heartedly; died for it cheerfully. Now, they tell us, our religion is passing away. Substitute religions are springing up, as well as dull, dreary creeds which substitute no religion. Unfaith, they tell us, is supplanting faith. Is it so? Perhaps not all; but a part of it, I believe. Has something dropped out of the religion of Christ, then? Or have we grown so complex, latterly, that the sim-

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

plicity of Christ's message no longer fits our emotions? No. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; his word is as efficacious, if we accept it sincerely. But do we? How many of us live our religion? How many of us would even die for it? And how many would be dying, not for their religion, but for their pride's sake? It is time for us to range ourselves. It is time for those who believe heartily to show it; and for those who believe conventionally to confess it openly and without shame. The man who professes that which he ought to believe, whether he believes it or not, is almost beyond hope. There is far more chance for the man who honestly believes nothing at all. An open enemy is respected; a half-hearted friend is despised."

Amy sat wondering in her pew. Father Clarges's words, for the most part, passed her unheeded. True, he was giving voice to her sentiments, but words count for little with woman, who would rather change her opinions to agree with a man she likes than admit that she agrees with a man she is indifferent to.

Amy's mother had possessed the admirable qual-

THE CHAMELEON

ity of directness, but unfortunately for herself she had also been what we call breezy. Unfortunately; for breeziness in our confined, delicate lives resembles too closely a gust in a boudoir to be agreeable. Crash! Over goes the table. Flutter, scatter, the papers are whisking out of the window. When Mrs. Power had paid a visit the air was left a trifle fresher, but certainly, too, some ideas were always left in disorder, some cherished conventional principles were temporarily overturned. The principles could be easily righted, but no one likes to be constantly readjusting one's mental furniture—though it is occasionally amusing to see such a necessity overtaking a neighbor. So Mrs. Power had never been a popular woman. She seemed to care little about this, and went cheerfully on her hearty way. Amy was born; and her mother, a little later, came to die. Before she went away, she said to her husband,

“Henry, I hope the little girl won't grow into such a tearer as I've been.”

Her husband, who was a notably quiet man, merely closed his hand upon hers.

“It does no good,” she continued, reflectively,

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

“ to be always trying to show people what is right. I see that now. Your way is better, Henry.”

“ My dear ! ” he answered her softly. “ My dear ! ”

“ Yes, much better. I should try it if I had another chance. Don’t contradict me, Henry Power ; I *know* your way is better.” Saying this, with somewhat feeble positiveness, she went to sleep, and soon afterward died. As such a woman is generally the object of dislike, so her husband is usually the target for ridicule. Probably he deserves it. Power, at least, never seemed to mind. For some ten years he was, if possible, more quiet than before ; then he, too, died, and bequeathed his daughter, Amy, to his wife’s brother. In those ten years the little girl had received the seal of silence. Her subsequent association with her uncle developed her inherited straightforwardness, but did nothing to teach her expression. Murdoch usually talked for both of them. Amy was at this time nineteen ; short as the young giantesses go now, when girls are bred for bone ; brown rather than dark ; and quite ignorant of what she expected

THE CHAMELEON

Life to bring her, yet anxious at least to see it—a child, if you please, on the night before Christmas. But Amy would never have dreamed of analyzing herself in such a fashion. Self-analysis was what she had no turn for. She lived on quietly.

She went home from church and dined with her uncle and his lawyer, Barrett Senior. Murdoch was in high spirits. Their business was not yet finished, he declared, but when it was Amy should know, provided she did not become too obviously inquisitive; and he winked at Barrett Senior. Immediately after dinner the two retired once more, leaving Amy alone. A little later, however, the rector of St. Hilda's dropped in. Over his robes, suspended from his neck, he wore a gold chain supporting a long jet cross, on which was carved the figure of a writhing Christ. As Clarges strolled across the room the outstretched arms lay helplessly against his breast.

“Well, Amy. I have an hour between services, you see.” Thus he explained his coming. She nodded and went on reading; he, too, picked up a book, but presently he looked up to say,

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

“What did you think of my sermon?”

“I didn’t hear much of it. I was thinking.”

“It wasn’t meant for you, anyway.” He turned a page carelessly, and after a moment or two she resumed her reading. Shortly he came round before her and laid a hand on her book. She looked up; her eyes were so cold that Bradford would have shivered to see them, but Clarges seemed not to mind. “Talk to me,” he said, abruptly. She let her hands clasp above the book in her lap, and stared at him serenely and contemplatively. He gave a short laugh.

“You are growing up, Amy. You are no longer my little girl.”

“I have never been your little girl.”

The writhing Christ hung just before her face as he stood over her. “Never?”

“Never, Father Clarges. I have never liked you—as I think you know.”

He laughed again. “Oh, yes; I know. You have a way of letting people know, Amy. But you never told me so before.”

“I never shall again, Father.”

“What don’t you like about me?” he urged,

THE CHAMELEON

with a queer smile. "My looks? My profession?"

"Oh, your profession!" she cried, suddenly. "I wonder if you care a particle about your profession?"

The writhing Christ on his breast slowly, imperceptibly lifted, as he drew a long breath. "Why do you wonder that?"

"See how you treat people! You ride over them; you do not turn aside at all for them. Do you ever care for anyone beside yourself? Do you really care whether anyone is ever saved or not?" The downrightness of her words was emphasized by their calm; she struck hard and indifferently.

"Don't you know, Amy," he answered, staring at her steadily, "that there are only two classes of ministers nowadays—those who are bullied by their congregations, and those who bully? We must choose one thing or the other. Morally, as well as in other ways, it is better for us and for them that we should bully." His dark eyes were narrowed; she was looking down, not at him, and his lips worked nervously. But as she glanced up,

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

the same ironical, confusing smile which Bradford hated quickly resumed its place. "Profession of faith," he said, harshly. "To bully or not to bully, that is the question. I—bully."

"Yes," she said, clearly and indifferently still, "you bully."

"Why do you choose to-day to tell me this, Amy?" he asked, more gently.

"I thought you asked me," she said, surprised.

"Yesterday—" he said, and stopped. She waited. "Amy," he began again, "I hope that in my bullying you don't think I'm rude? You don't think I contrast too strongly with—with the other young men whom you meet?" She made no answer.

"Do you?" he urged, still with his sardonic half-smile.

"I think you are rude—yes," she said, wearily. "Why do you force me to say unpleasant things?"

"You might have told an untruth to save my feelings, perhaps." Amy passed this over in silence.

Clarges walked to the window and stood looking

THE CHAMELEON

out. The sun was bright on a world made raw by the damp Carfax wind. Murdoch's house was not commensurate with the size of his fortune, but it stood in large grounds. At the side the bare syringa bushes bowed and shivered. Late fallen leaves whipped suddenly across the lawn, testifying to the carelessness of Murdoch's gardener. Beyond, the edge-row of elms gauntly displayed their withered charms. Carfax is seldom beautiful in November. Suddenly Clarges turned, as if he hoped to find the girl's eyes on him; but Amy was quietly reading.

"They told me your Uncle was busy."

"Yes. Mr. Barrett has been with him all day."

"I must be going to my service."

"Good-afternoon, Father."

"You will not come with me?"

"No, thank you, Father."

The rector went out, pulling his flat, clerical hat well down, lest the wind seize it from him. St. Hilda's and the clergy-house were five blocks from Murdoch's. He walked the whole distance with his eyes on the sidewalk. He passed several of his parishioners, who waited for a word, but received

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

none. One woman stopped her carriage, and, having called to him, beckoned him to come, but he shook his head unsmilingly and went on.

“He *is* so odd,” she said to her companion, half-vexed. “But *such* a dear!”

Clarges, when he had reached his rooms, removed the jet Christ, and hung it carefully upon a silvered nail above a little oratory. He went into another room, and stripped the upper half of his body bare. His chest, beneath the spot where the cross had lain, was seamed and scarred, as if it had been cut with knives. He knelt before the oratory, and, raising his hands to the writhing Christ, he prayed silently. But as he prayed his thoughts began to wander.

“Yesterday,” he thought, “she watched that man as—as she has never looked at me. He cares for her, that is plain, as much as he can care for anyone. Am I mistaken in him? Has he the honesty to love her as she must be loved? O God, God!” He shivered. “Am I so little of a man that while I am kneeling before Thee I must be abusing in my thoughts another man—because *she* loves him? Forgive me, forgive me!” He rose,

THE CHAMELEON

and took from a drawer a curious instrument, a strigil with a square, narrow handle and dependent, sharp-edged steel fringe. With this, in utter silence, he lashed himself and relashed himself upon the old scars of his breast, until the blood sprang freely. Then in the next room, when he had sponged the cuts and laid a thick cotton cloth above them, he resumed his robes. Before the oratory he knelt once more a moment; then with his slow step and his half-smile, the rector of St. Hilda's went down to service.

In the shadow of ten million dollars, most of us, in spite of the mighty fortunes of this epoch, grow a trifle awed. Ten millions tower so! Even Murdoch, though he had it to give, shivered a little when he considered it directly. But Barrett Senior, "The Father," in Carfax slang, hummed a tune when the business was finished, and he gathered certain papers together.

"This will certainly rouse talk, John," he said, in a slow, old, soft voice, with a humorous twinkle in his blue eyes. His was a pleasant, innocent face. "Yes, this will certainly rouse some talk."

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

"None till we're ready for it," cautioned Murphy. "I don't want it to get out just yet."

Barrett contemplated him. "Did you know that Harley Schaefer was looking for a divorce?" he asked. Murdoch's attention was set upon the ten million—his ten million—and the question did not come home to him for a minute. Then he cried, "Harley Schaefer!"

"He's not, you know," said Barrett, placidly. "To the best of my knowledge, he believes his wife to be a highly estimable woman. But *if* he were, and if our firm had the case, you would hardly expect me to speak of it, would you?"

Murdoch grinned. "Well, I'm sorry I hurt your feelings, Mr. Barrett. But this will cause talk, eh?"

"Talk? They'll talk like—" But the innocent old gentleman's simile is best left to the imagination, as possibly someone may wish to send this story through the mails. "Why, my dear John, when Carfax hears about this money, Carfax will get upon its hind legs and bay the moon. The whole country will."

THE CHAMELEON

"I hope so," said Murdoch, decidedly. "It ought to be a great ad., eh?"

"It will be."

"The time's come," went on the pickle-maker, firmly, "when Carfax College has got to move up if she means to be in the procession at all."

"You're quite right, John." His finger-tips together, the careful nails the object of his contemplation, the lawyer listened approvingly.

"And she's not only going to be in the procession, she's going to head it. I don't see any reason why Carfax shouldn't lead Harvard, or Columbia, or any of the rest of 'em. All it takes is money, and here's the money."

"Here," said Barrett, "is a gob of it—to phrase it vulgarly."

"You don't seem to think much of it," said Murdoch, with a distant reproach in his tone.

"Of ten million, John? I think a lot of it; I think so much of it it makes my mouth water; and therefore, with your permission, I think I'll just have a cigar."

"Something with it?"

"Something with it, as you say, John." So

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

the lawyer and the ordinary American citizen who had just made arrangements to give away ten million dollars to Carfax College and the cause of education—with perhaps an incidental eye upon the advertisement—sipped a little whiskey-and-water together on the raw, bright Sunday afternoon.

“It strikes me, John,” suggested the lawyer, at length, “that you have left one thing out of consideration.”

“What’s that?” demanded Murdoch, hastily.

“Well, after all, it’s a little thing, but I haven’t heard you speak of it. No; I’ll not have any more whiskey, thanks. If you’ll forgive me, John, this whiskey of yours reminds me a little of some that an old client of mine gave me on a fee once. He owed me five hundred dollars, and he offered me twenty-five gallons of rye, which he said was twenty-five years old. It was all he had in the world, so of course I took it. About a year afterward my brother-in-law happened to be visiting me, and I thought of this whiskey and gave him some. He’s a great judge of whiskey. I told him it was twenty-five years old, and asked him what he thought

THE CHAMELEON

of it. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘Mack, I don’t doubt it is twenty-five years old, but I doubt if it was any d——n good in the first place.’ That discouraged me a little. But I found a use for it finally. I had a hen-ranch down south of here then. I had a new breed of hen; Barred Spanish Rocks; I never saw such hens to lay. They’d lay day and night. The only trouble was, they got cramps from sitting still so much. So I used the whiskey for liniment, and it worked like a charm. Killed two birds with one stone, as you might say.”

Murdoch’s laughter over this story was a little uneasy. He thought that Barrett was merely gaining time. “What’s the thing I haven’t provided for?” he demanded.

Barrett ruminated. “The old Doctor,” he said, at last.

Murdoch’s face clouded in an instant.

“You think?”

“You’ll have to get rid of him.”

“Why?”

“Bless my soul, he can no more do what you want done than—” Again one of the unprintable similes.

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

“I was thinking the same,” admitted Murdoch.

“How are you going to get rid of him, if he wants to hang on?”

“That’s for the board to say.”

“Nonsense, John. When you have given them this money, you’ll be the boss; you know that. What you say will go. What—you—say—will—go, John.”

“Do you think he’ll insist on staying?”

“No-o; I don’t believe he will. That’s why I say this is a small matter, after all. But he won’t be feeling very pleasantly toward you, John.”

“Why not?” Murdoch was genuinely puzzled.

“Why, bless my soul,” chuckled the old lawyer again. “Why, bless my soul, boy! Don’t you see you’ll be putting him out of his job? He’ll be fancying Providence has gone back on him about that time.”

Murdoch sighed. “I suppose you’re right,” he said, sadly. “Well, he’ll have to go, but I’m mighty sorry about it. He’s a fine old man, the Doctor; not a thing the matter with him, except that he’s past sixty-five.”

THE CHAMELEON

Barrett coughed affectedly. "Yes, we old men have to go to the wall," he said.

"Can't I pension him off some way? Ain't there a thing they call emeritus, or something of the sort—an honorary job?" He pronounced it with the accent on the third syllable—emer-i-tus; it sounded like some strange disease. The lawyer nodded.

"Well," continued the pickle-maker, "we'll make an emer-i-tus out of him then." His face grew bright again. "By the Lord Harry, I'd give him five thousand a year for grubbing up his Greek before I'd hurt his feelings—the old Doctor! We'll turn him out to pasture, and get some young fellow to do the work. By the way—how's that chap I sent you doing—Bradford?"

"Begins mighty well." Barrett smiled reminiscently. "He put us on the trail of something big a while ago—if it turns out."

"What was that?"

The fresh-faced old gentleman winked—very slowly and very expertly winked.

"But there's a good deal of fireworks about that

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

young Bradford, too," he continued, irrelevantly. "I should judge that he was a better starter than a stayer."

"If," returned Murdoch, impressively, "if you don't find that boy, in ten, fifteen years, head of your shop—call me a clam."

"Whatever I call you, John," amiably replied Barrett, "it will not be a clam."

"There goes a fine man," said the pickle-maker, watching Father Clarges striding down the walk. Murdoch had completed a hard day's work, and he had every reason to believe that his reputation was soon to be greatly exalted by it. He was a generous man who had just done a generous deed, on a tremendous scale. Therefore all men were fine men to him. Moreover, he rather liked the minister.

"Don't know him," observed the lawyer. "Seems to be some sort of priest."

"He is the rector of St. Hilda's; Clarges is his name. Comes over here a good deal—to see Amy, I guess; I know it ain't to curry favor with me. By the Lord Harry, Barrett—you like independent men, you'd like to see him stand up to his con-

THE CHAMELEON

gregation. He doesn't give a continental d——n for any of us."

"Except the females, eh? You know the old saying—look for the shepherd among the ewes."

"No; this chap's a different breed. If he was like some ministers, I wouldn't let him into my house. But I've seen him summer and winter now, for years, and he'll do. I'd like to have you meet him; he'd give you a slap in the face of some sort." Murdoch chuckled.

"Rare bird for a minister," observed Barrett, comfortably. "Very—rare—bird. I've seen 'em here and I've seen 'em there, but I never saw one yet that didn't grin when he shook hands. By the way, I didn't know you were a religious man, John."

Murdoch smiled. "Nature is God enough for me. But I like music, and singing, and a little show, you know; so I go to the Episcopalian church. It's as good as a play. I'll tell you what I believe, Mr. Barrett; if a man keeps a clean body, and clean hands, and likes the out-doors, and treats women like a man and not like a brute, he

TEN MILLION AND A GIRL

can go to what church he pleases, or to none at all, and yet sleep nights like a child."

"Surely, surely." The old lawyer nodded, and puffed at his cigar. "John, these Perfectos are better than mine. Where'd you get 'em?"

Chapter Ten

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

Bradford, that day after a lazy Sunday evening tea, lay on the couch for a few minutes and meditated. Then he asked, "Shedsy, come to church with me to-night?"

"Is thy servant——"

"Come on, Shedsy. It's to St. Hilda's, and they have singing, playing, and dancing."

"A b-ballet, quotha? Certainly I'll go."

What drew Bradford to St. Hilda's? One might call it the fascination of the snake for the bird. There was no man he liked less, and none he thought of more, than the rector of that fashionable congregation. He was sure that Clarges and he were opposed to each other, and he feared that Clarges had the superiority—at least he feared that Clarges knew something to his discredit. He wondered whether the minister had read of his

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

speech at the mass-meeting the night before; and what he thought of it—whether he fathomed the motives that lay behind it. Bradford was not at all certain, as he tried to consider the matter in cold blood, what those motives had been. Bradford never wished to deceive himself, and he had a habit of questioning himself before an *alter ego* which generally revealed the truth. But in this case he was honestly in doubt. How much did he care for the ethics of sport? Little, he might have contemptuously acknowledged to himself twenty-four hours previously; but last night the ring in Shedsy's congratulations had waked some echo in his heart, at the strength of which he was now astonished. The more he reflected the surer he grew that his speech had been the outgrowth of a solid conviction; that Bradford One had been, in attributing to Clarges a justifiable contempt of his honesty, unjust to Bradford Two. So reassuring himself, Bradford grew at once more amiably inclined to the minister, though no less sensitive to his judgment. At this point in his musings he made up his mind to go to church and see the man again.

THE CHAMELEON

“By the way, Frank,” Shedsy interpolated, “g-give me a stamp, will you?”

“Ever since I knew you, Shedsy,” said Bradford, lazily, “you’ve written one letter—just one—on Sunday, and borrowed a stamp to send it. You’ll find some in my coat, which you’ll be a good fellow and bring me afterward.”

“They’re in a g-good cause,” laughed Barnes. “It’s to my m-mother. Which pocket?”

“Inside.”

“Nothing here but a letter,” reported Shedsy, from the next room. “It hasn’t any stamp, either. Do you want it—” As he read the address on that letter his voice died off suddenly, and Bradford jumped up and took a step toward the room. Then he stopped himself.

“The other pocket,” he said, with an effort. There was no answer from Shedsy; but in a moment he came out, with self-consciousness reddening his face, and handed Bradford the coat. When they were on their way he said, stumblingly,

“I didn’t mean to p-pry, Frank.”

“You saw the letter addressed to—my mother?”

“Yes.” He stopped. At length he added,

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

“Does she still seem so near as—that—to you, Frank? F-forgive me if I’m clumsy, but—of course, I remember when she died, and all, and it brought it up so to see that address, I c-couldn’t help speaking of it.”

“That’s all right. It was—just a whim of mine, one night; the night I came back. She was so near me, somehow, I thought perhaps she would know what I had written.”

“I believe she d-did.” Shedsy found himself wondering what Bradford had written; he put the wonder away shamefacedly, but it returned again. Shedsy, after nine years away from home, still wrote dutifully, as Bradford had said, once a week to his mother; there was a kind of heroism in his regularity, for there was a perfunctoriness in it, too, very far removed from the sentiment expressed in this letter’s address—“To my Mother in Heaven.” And Shedsy felt very tenderly toward Frank Bradford in that moment. For this reason, and because he felt sure that Bradford was embarrassed, Shedsy began to ask him about the office.

“How are you g-getting on?”

THE CHAMELEON

“I haven’t done much yet. Still——”

“What then?”

“Well, I have done one pretty fair bit of work.”

“What’s that?”

Bradford hesitated. He knew he had no business to speak of office cases, but he had a double temptation. He feared that Shedsy might be thinking him foolish and sentimental; and, more than that, he was especially anxious these days to convince himself as well as others that he was worth while.

“You’re sure you’ll let this go no farther?” Shedsy desired unhappy death if he did; and so Bradford told him. The case was that of which Barrett had a few hours before hinted to Murdoch.

“We have a matter up for action in which a deed is offered in evidence. We think the deed is forged; in fact, we must prove that it is forged, or false in some way. There’s a big lot of money involved—half a million, in fact.”

Shedsy opened his eyes. “It’s the Barton case!”

“Yes. But you needn’t advertise it. Well, as I was saying, the question is, did Mrs. Barton sign

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

this deed? She's dead now, and so can't testify. But the notary whose name is signed to the acknowledgment is alive, and ready to swear himself blue in the face that she signed as the instrument purports."

"Haven't you called in h-handwriting experts?"

"Oh, yes. Our men swear that she probably didn't sign it; their men swear she probably did. For a cautious but diplomatic liar, give me a handwriting expert. Now what are we to do?"

"That's very s-simple," replied Shedsy. "Imitate the c-cat again, and climb a t-tree."

Bradford laughed. Shedsy's confession was wine to him. "The firm was looking for a tree, I think, when I made a suggestion."

"What?"

"Swear you'll never peep?"

"On honor."

"One day, when I was looking at a deed-form, I happened to notice that not all the letters were printed clean. A capital T had a flat top, and a little s was minus a tail; and so on. It occurred to me right away that I had hit upon a method

THE CHAMELEON

of identifying a deed, after a fashion. You know the firms which manufacture them run them off in big lots, and then distribute the type. Of course, the next form will have defects of its own in the printing, but the defects will be in different letters. The casual reader will say that the lot which were run off in April were exactly like those in March, but he will be wrong—there will be little differences. Well, then, in thinking that over, it seemed to me that if we could find out just what lot the particular deed-form we were interested in was part of, we might prove something. The deed was dated January, 1885. Mrs. Barton died in May of 1886. Suppose we could show conclusively, by this scheme of mine, that the particular set of forms of which this form was a part had been run off in January of 1889, say? Obviously we should prove that Mrs. Barton's pretended signature was a forgery; she couldn't very well sign, in 1885, on a form which wasn't printed till four years later. That was what I suggested to Mr. Barrett."

"So you've got the case won!" said Shedsy of the simple mind.

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

“Not exactly! We’ve still got to find out just what lot this deed-form was a part of, and to make sure it *was* issued after the pretended date of Mrs. Barton’s signature, or we’re no forrarder than before. But the firm has all kinds of men working now along just those lines. Of course, the forgers had been crafty enough to cut the name of the firm who printed the form off the bottom, so it wasn’t as simple as you’d think. Besides, we couldn’t go round asking openly, or the other side would find out our game and work up some scheme to block it. But the old man—Barrett—discovered that one phrase in the Barton deed-form was always used in the forms of a certain firm, and very seldom by any other, and that helped us. So we’re getting on.”

“I c-comprehend. And you’re in this still hunt for the d-deed, of course?”

“Oh, that’s hackwork, Shedsy. They’ve put clerks on that.”

“Still, I should think you’d b-be so interested, you’d want to be in at the d-death.”

“Now don’t you mention this, even to the fellows.”

THE CHAMELEON

“I won’t, of c-course.”

Even-song at St. Hilda’s was not conducted by Clarges himself, but by a curate. So Bradford was disappointed in his wish to see the rector. But he gladly gave himself up to the sensuous enjoyment of candle-flare and rolling music. He could always think better when music was in his ears; though it was not, after all, thinking that came to him at such times, rather a series of pictures in which he was always the central figure, and of which at the same time he yet stood by observant. He shut his eyes, determined not to be disturbed by uprisings and downsittings; and Shedsy, after a vain attempt to follow the motions of the other worshippers, gave it all up as a bad job, and imitated Bradford. The service was very new to Shedsy; in the twenty-five years of his life he had never before penetrated to the interior of an Episcopalian church, and he was constantly and freshly amused. But Bradford refused to respond to his requests for information, and at length Shedsy grew interested in a particular choir-boy, who was tickling another with a feather in the pauses of seraphic singing, and left Bradford to himself.

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

What did Bradford see? A broad, dark-green floor of sea, which ran out to the edge of the world and ended abruptly in a red circle of sun. Black against the red, a boat drifted. Bradford held one hand upon the idle tiller, and with the other clasped the hand of a girl; she had gray eyes. A black-barred gate opened into the sun, and they drifted through. It swung to behind them; they were alone.

He saw a great square house at night. Beside its door were narrow panes of glass, flushed scarlet by a light behind—such glass, he remembered, had been in their old hallway at home. The door opened, and from innumerable lights within a gush of radiance sprang out, so strong that the grass beside the path was green as in the daytime, and black columnar trees leaped into view all round him. He walked down the path, among the trees, and with him this girl with gray eyes. The door closed in the lights, and once more they were alone.

He saw an interminable procession, two by two, in dusty, yellowish-brown clothes, a procession which crawled on a winding yellow road through flat brown land. The sun above beat straight

THE CHAMELEON

down upon them all. A nasty wind spat whorls of dust. Bradford walked at the head of this procession; the minister walked with him. They turned their bodies slowly, as men do in the extreme of weariness, and saw beside them a girl with gray eyes in which the weariness was as great as in their own. Bradford would have gone to her, but a river ran between them somehow, and when he would have plunged in she waved him away. She faded slowly out of his longing sight; and Clarges opened his lips in a sneer. "Is she for you, then?" cried Bradford, fiercely.

He was not aware that he had spoken aloud, but Shedsy gripped his arm. "Wake up, Frank! Don't be talking in meeting!" Bradford observed heads turning his way, and huddled abashed in his corner. When the service was over they hurried out. At the door Bradford started. His memory had not played him false, for here was the very face he had seen in that final vision. Clarges bowed; then, seeming to alter his mind, advanced toward them and shook hands with Bradford. Shedsy stared at him furtively.

"Father Clarges, let me present my friend, Mr.

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

Barnes." Mr. Barnes also shook hands with becoming gravity, but the vestments were plainly heavy on his mind.

"Doing anything in particular? Glad to have you both come up to my rooms a while," said Clarges, abruptly.

"I'm afraid we can't do that," began Bradford, but Shedsy interrupted. "If you're thinking of me, Frank, I can wait p-perfectly well," he said, innocently, and Bradford could only follow the rector up the stairs.

"I hated to go back on you," explained Shedsy, afterward, "but I've never had a chance to see that sort of animal in his den before, and I c-couldn't pass it."

"What a frabjous c-cave!" was his admiring remark when they had reached the rector's rooms. "Did you see the p-pipe-rack?" he demanded of Bradford afterward, "and that little lady-bull pipe with amber and s-slab-gold m-mounting? When I saw that p-pipe I wished I was a minister; yes, sir, I'd be willing to wear w-worse aprons than he wore to g-get it. And did you see that gold chain h-hanging over the hole in the wall with an

THE CHAMELEON

image in it? He's g-got so many, likely, he h-hasn't room to put them all away. And did you see the c-curtains? *And* the rugs? C-call me a Hebrew pedler if one w-wasn't Daghestan. And the b-books, books—yes, sir, a r-rector's life is the life for m-me, a home by the p-parish church!"

Bradford and Clarges talked, but Bradford talked very badly, and felt cheap and dull. He was like an actor at rehearsal, where nobody is present but the disillusioned stage-manager. Bradford could never do his best unless he had his audience. Clarges, however, was wonderfully polite and tactful. And one matter of the interview must be chronicled—the conversion of Shedsy Barnes to Episcopalianism. Shedsy made no secret that he went up to the rector's rooms possessed of the idea that the man was a curiosity; at the very least, a foreigner of some sort; at the worst, a Jesuit. Shedsy had never beheld a Jesuit with his naked eye, but he was well aware that they had horns and a tail, and occupied themselves in whispering dark plots. But he left Clarges's rooms satisfied that this man, though he chose to

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

dress like an ass (the phraseology is that of Mr. Barnes), was nevertheless an American gentleman. For it happened that Clarges mentioned football, and spoke of it, not tentatively as women do, but with apparent authority. He could even compare certain teams with others. In so doing he and Shedsy found themselves at variance.

“I dislike to contradict, Mr.—I mean F-Father C-Clarges,” said Shedsy, “but I’m p-perfectly sure that no team has ever beaten that p-particular university two years in succession.”

“Certain of it?”

“M-might’ nigh.”

“Yet we beat them in ’88, and again in ’89,” the rector insisted. “I ought to know, Mr. Barnes; I played in both games.”

“You p-played in both g-games?”

“Yes.”

The sun rose in Shedsy’s face. “L-look here! You’re not C-Clarges of Yale ’89?”

“Yes.”

“Well, by Jove!” cried Shedsy. “Well, by Jove!” He looked the rector carefully up and down. “I see now; I see now. I b-beg your par-

THE CHAMELEON

don, s-sir." Shedsy dropped out of the conversation, but ever and anon his eyes remeasured the rector, and his lips murmured again in admiration and enjoyment, "C-Clarges of '89!" There was no doubt of it; Shedsy was converted to Episcopalianism. But Bradford could not rid himself of the idea that the rector was weighing him, estimating him, luring him on to commit himself to some stupidity; and he was cautious and flippant by turns, till Shedsy looked a little surprised.

When the two had gone Clarges sat for some time looking at the cross above his little shrine. Then he shook his head slowly.

"I wish it might have been the other one, even," he muttered. "Boy as he is, I wish it had been the other one. And yet—isn't it possible that I'm mistaken, even now?"

Whatever it was which had led Clarges to ask Bradford to his rooms continued its influence throughout the winter. Bradford came again, always against his will and his judgment, and yet inevitably. And the minister went to the Residium. Kate was like Shedsy; Clarges the rector might be looked upon with suspicion, but Clarges

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

of '89 was welcome wherever they had a voice. He appeared not infrequently, though irregularly; sometimes, after weeks of absence, he would turn up unexpectedly, and smoke for an hour without saying a word. That appealed to Slim; Slim set before kings a man who could do that. The boys all liked Clarges. But Bradford was known to be his especial friend. Often they sat up late, when the others had slipped away to bed. Bradford was bound by his curious fascination; Clarges by what spirit? That last was a question which Bradford asked himself over and over. What did the man mean by offering his friendship in this fashion? What end was he seeking? Was he searching for evidence that should prove Bradford unworthy? And if he found it, how did he mean to use it? Bradford, with a daring which surprised himself, though it was only the bravado of any man who fancies himself discovered in something he is ashamed of, used to talk to Clarges sometimes about sentiment, and diplomacy, and various kindred subjects which relate more or less directly to the great topic of sincerity.

“There is such a thing,” he said, one night,

THE CHAMELEON

“as the prostitution of tact; but after all I fancy most people would prefer a lie to rudeness. I am certain that women do.”

“Some women,” corrected Clarges. Bradford thought of Amy, and wondered if Clarges were not thinking of her, too. He laughed defiantly.

“Most women. What sort of a monstrosity would a straightforward courtship be—in which a man told the woman of his choice just what he was thinking of her? ‘You are not the most beautiful woman in the world; you are not even the most beautiful in this block. Amanda Brown, round the corner, has larger, more dove-like eyes; Susanna Jones, across the street, has a more charming complexion. It is true that I love you more than I do any other; but I know several who are cleverer than you. I want you for my wife, because I am tired of living alone; clubs are inadequate, and a man cannot manage a house-keeper.’ How great success would such a wooer achieve?”

“What do you argue from that?”

“That a man must conceal his sentiments, and

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

suit his emotions to the occasion. Nowadays one who exhibits his real self is considered by men uncouth, and by women brutal."

"I saw a man last week," said Clarges, irrelevantly, "who is supporting the only surviving member of his family—a brother, who is helpless and almost insane from his own excesses. He retains two feelings; one, a hatred of institutions; the other, a hatred of this man I am speaking of, who supports him. He will not speak to him; he not infrequently spits at him. Yet my man, who is a clerk in a small way, works his fingers to the bone to keep his brother comfortable. I happen to know him well; and I happen to know that he gave up all thought of marriage, though the girl would have taken him even with his encumbrance. He told her bluntly that he would neither leave his brother nor subject any woman to constant association with such a beast. He never complains; but he knows me, as I say, and when I asked him last week how matters were going he only said, 'The doctor says that with fair luck I ought to see the last of Jim in about ten months or so.' 'What do you think?' I asked him, and he shook his head.

THE CHAMELEON

‘God knows; I ain’t as sanguine as the doctor; I know Jim’s cussedness.’ What would you have advised him, Bradford—to back up the heroism of his acts by a suitable phraseology?”

“What became of the girl he was to marry?”

Clarges smiled his dark little smile. “Why, for some reason, she made up her mind he was worth having; and she’s waiting for him,” he answered.

“And when she gets him—when the encumbrance is dropped,” said Bradford, ironically, “will she be any the happier for owning a husband who eats the burnt chops, and damns her bad cooking at the same time? I don’t believe she will. I think she will regret that her lot is not cast with a man who would praise them, and diplomatically give them to the dog when her back was turned.”

“But suppose that afterward she discovered the dog bolting them?” asked Clarges. Bradford shrugged his shoulders. “Talking in parables is dull work,” he said, “but the man would be duller who let himself be discovered.” He looked Clarges momentarily in the eye, then turned to poke up the

PILGRIMS IN BROWN

soft-coal fire which was the glory of the Residium.

“I’m off,” said the rector.

“Lord love you, listen to the storm! Surely you’ll stay the night, old man?” One of the January blizzards had shut down on Carfax. The sleet was howling like wolves across the river in unending lines; the icy cottonwoods were swaying to the ground, and it was very cold. But the rector shook his head. Bradford insisted, but his will was no match for that of Clarges of ’89. He was used to walking on bad nights, he said; and he ploughed out into the drifted city. When he reached his room he was exhausted, powerful man though he was. He undressed at once. The cloth upon his breast was stuck to his body with dried blood. He tore at it fiercely, but it would not loosen, so he let it remain. He dropped on his knees before his little shrine, and prayed—prayed as fiercely as he had striven with the wind, or as he had tortured himself that day. “Keep this tragedy from coming into her life, O God!” he cried. “I ask nothing for myself; I swear it before your throne! Do to me as you will, but

THE CHAMELEON

keep her from this sorrow!" His voice died away, while the screams of the wind continued up and down the street, and round the gargoyled cornices of St. Hilda's. The morning found the rector still before his shrine.

Chapter Eleven

TROUBLE COMES TO SHEDSY

That winter, Shedsy Barnes lost no opportunity of declaring, was the finest of his life.

"C-college," said he one evening, philosophically, "is ideal, except that n-nobody works. You have a l-lovely time, but there's no contrast to it. Now you have the atmosphere just the s-same, and you come back to it every night from the st-storm and st-stress of the world, just t-tired enough to know how h-heavenly it all is."

"You're lucky to be out of college, if you fancy the old way is ideal," Kate contributed, cynically. "We're going to have a regeneration, they say, and the modern laboratory method of education. The Alma Mater idea is about played out; we're to be fed from a bottle, hygienically and economically, now."

"They've been telling you yarns, K-Kitty,

THE CHAMELEON

dear," soothed Shedsy. "Carfax isn't to be changed. The r-revolutionary pickle-maker has kept his hands in his p-pockets, after all."

"It's a pity if he does," broke in Bradford. "Oh, I know, Kate; you think all that Dr. Craven does is right, and I don't blame you. But you know very well we're behind the times here. There's no place in the West for a college of Carfax's sort; a man who wants that sort of thing, a man who can afford to loaf along four agreeable years, will go east to Amherst or Williams, where they loaf genteelly and in some style. It's the ordinary man in money-matters, the man who wants an education at all hazards, that the western college must cater to, if it is really doing its duty. It is bound to furnish him the best in the market, at a price within his reach. It's all very well to talk about the passing of romance, and the death of Alma Mater; but the true object of an educational centre is to forward the progress of thought by all means in its power, not to furnish athletic amusement with a dash of sentiment and a tincture of book-learning to a lazy lot of male children."

"So you think that's Dr. Craven's ideal?"

TROUBLE COMES TO SHEDSY

“Don’t get huffy, my Kate. I think Dr. Craven is one of the finest old gentlemen living. But—without the slightest disrespect to him—every dog has his day, you know.”

“And now that he has given the best of his life to Carfax College, you would say to him—‘Your time’s come; get out!’ Is that your idea, Frank?”

“Does it sound brutal? And yet you’ve just said the word, Kate; he’s given the best of his life to his work. Presently another man will be called, who must give the best of *his* life, and so on; that’s the way the world manages to progress at all, isn’t it?”

“Is that the world? Then I’m sorry I’m in it; it sounds more like the car of Juggernaut to me.” Kate, after a moment, rose and went out.

“I don’t think you ought to p-put it so strong, F-Frank,” said Shedsy, soberly. “Of course, you’ve g-got all the reason on your side; b-but for some cause or other, K-Kate feels pretty fierce about this, and your having the r-reason makes it all the worse.”

“Oh, you’re right, of course. But somehow, I seem to be in a nasty mood this winter. Shedsy?”

THE CHAMELEON

Shedsy was filling a pipe carefully. "What is it?"

"Haven't you ever been in love?"

The tobacco spilled over the edge of the pipe, but Shedsy answered lightly, "Never; but I got drunk once, to see what it was like."

"What would you say if I told you I was in love?"

"Hope for the b-best, I reckon."

"There's only one best, and that's out of my reach."

Very slowly, very mechanically, Shedsy rammed the tobacco into the bowl with his thumb. Once more he saw the futility of his opposition to the laws of nature; once more he saw this cherished Residuum of his crashing about his ears; once more he listened to the rustle of skirts, as Eve entered, Eve the eternal, dragging the serpent. Was there no touch of the sublime in the answer Shedsy made?

"Want to t-tell me all about it, F-Frank?"

"You've seen her," answered Bradford, accepting the invitation with the eager, careless selfishness of a man in love. "Her name is Amy Power."

TROUBLE COMES TO SHEDSY

“The girl you m-met on your way b-back last fall?” questioned Shedsy, carefully.

“Yes.”

“And?”

“Sometimes I think she cares a little, Shedsy; mostly I don’t dare believe she does. I haven’t dared to say anything to her, yet; but she must know; don’t you think she must know?”

“I’m afraid I d-don’t know much about it, old boy.”

“Yes; but when I’m hinting at it all the time? When I go ’round there as much as I do? She can’t think I come to see her uncle, can she? He calls me by my first name, now. Do you think that’s a good sign, Shedsy?”

“You aren’t c-courting the old man, are you, Frank?”

“Don’t be funny, Shedsy. You’re a cold-blooded little brute; you don’t know what this means to me. Didn’t you see her at the football game? Don’t you remember what she looked like? Why, Shedsy, I haven’t been like half the men I know, making love to every nice girl I’ve seen; there’s no girl living can say honestly that

THE CHAMELEON

I've made love to her seriously. That makes this all the worse; that's what makes me so sure about myself this time. Every time I'm with her, I realize what a cheap, worthless sort of chap I am—how worthless we all are, compared to a girl like her. I never felt that way, before. Do you ever feel that way with girls, Shedsy? ”

“ I told you b-before, Frank; I always c-climb a tree.”

“ I'm not joking, Shedsy.”

“ I know, F-Frank; I know. Only—this has come a little s-sudden, you see; I hadn't been g-guessing it.”

“ It seems to me anybody could see it! Why, what do you think brings that man Clarges 'round here? ”

“ C-Clarges! ”

“ Yes, Clarges. He's in it, too; sometimes I think he has the inside track. He doesn't care a hang about me, or any of the rest of you either; he only comes to keep an eye on me, to see how I'm getting on. I go and see him for the same reason.” Bradford smiled forlornly.

“ C-Clarges! Now *you* are joking, F-Frank.”

TROUBLE COMES TO SHEDSY

"No, I'm not. I've seen them together; a man in my position can't be fooled. I know what he thinks about her, but I don't know what she thinks about him. You haven't told me what you thought of her when you saw her, Shedsy?" Bradford hung on the answer jealously.

Shedsy braced himself unseen. "I thought she was a w-winner, Frank."

Bradford nodded. The spell of confession seemed to be lifted. He sighed, and soon he followed Kate's example and left the room. Shedsy, lying on the couch, heard him putting on his overcoat and gloves; presently the door slammed; Bradford was gone. Shedsy turned over and laid his face upon his arms.

The slam of the door roused Kate, who issued forth from the room where he had been studying, and came in, a green-paper shade on his brow, a book pinched between his fingers. He shook Shedsy by the shoulder.

"Here, old boy, don't go to sleep in here; go to bed like a Christian."

"Shut up, will you?"

"What's the matter, Shedsy?"

THE CHAMELEON

The boy sat up defiantly, and brushed his hand across his eyes. "N-nothing."

Kate eyed him keenly. "Did Frank go out?"

"Yes."

"Has he been trying to row with you?"

"What do you t-take me for?"

"Then what's the trouble, Shedsy?"

"I'm l-lonely!" cried Shedsy, suddenly and with passion. "I'm lonely, if you've g-got to know, and be d-damned to you! No, we didn't row; he told me his troubles, and of course they were about a g-girl! Another friend g-gone, or going; that's all. G-God! I used to think, when I was a boy in college, that the f-friends I'd make there would be my friends all our l-lives. I thought we'd g-go on together, and g-grow old together, and sort of f-find out what life m-meant. What did I know about it? Roge is g-gone; Champ's g-gone; I never see them any more. I g-got you fellows into this R-Residuum scheme, and in four months Frank c-comes and tells me, as if I ought to s-sympathize with him, that he wants to go t-too. He's not the only one, I suppose; you'll go, and Slim;

TROUBLE COMES TO SHEDSY

and I'll plug along, and t-try to make some other f-friends, if I c-can. But I c-can't; nobody can be to me what you f-fellows are; the men are all too busy fighting each other, and c-competing with each other down there"—Shedsy pointed toward Carfax—"to get close to each other, as *we* have. I t-try not to be mean; I try to realize that it all m-multiplies the fellows' h-happiness, and only subtracts from m-mine; but it gets d-damned hard sometimes. What is it that's left out of m-me? I can love the fellows; why is it I d-don't want these experiences that c-come to them all, and seem to drive out everything that's gone b-before, so that they h-haven't any room left in their hearts for their friends? I c-can't talk their language; I c-can't really s-sympathize with them; the women they care so much about d-don't like me, and th-there you are!"

"Poor old Shedsy!" said Kate, softly.

"Yes, pity me!" answered Shedsy, bitterly. "That's about all I'm d-due for in life, I guess—a little p-pity!"

Kate sat down by him, moving the boy's legs to make room. "Shedsy," he said, "don't you

THE CHAMELEON

think you do your old friends an injustice?" But Shedsy shook his head.

"You don't know!" he answered, mournfully. "You d-don't know. As like as not, you're p-planning to leave me yourself—only you haven't t-told me yet." And he turned once more, and laid his face on his arm. Perhaps it was fortunate; it prevented him from seeing Kate's face. After that evening Shedsy was himself again; but he ceased declaring that this was the finest winter of his life, and there was something a little furtive in the occasional glance which he bestowed on Clarges, during the rector's visits to the flat of the Residuum.

Chapter Twelve

AMY IS WARNED

When Bradford received a formal invitation to dinner at the Murdoch's he was a trifle surprised, and he immediately began to wonder about the other guests. He was of course not at all astonished to find Dr. Craven, with his wife and daughter; nor did the presence of Clarges and Barrett mystify him in the least. The pickle-maker was not a step removed from that country hospitality which finds room always for the professional servants of the family—the doctor, the lawyer, and of course the minister. When he recalled Miss Mangler's malediction on such crude types as Murdoch represented he was, however, amazed to find her seated opposite him, smiling her vinegary smile. An ample woman, with bare and billowing shoulders, who followed in the wake of a small, energetic, elderly, iron-gray husband, were the only

THE CHAMELEON

other members of the party. He was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Gaines. Mrs. Gaines bowed with an obvious timidity in sharp contrast to the immensity of her proportions. She wore ear-rings—diamond circlets. Bradford wondered who they were, and learned later that Gaines, like Murdoch, was a trustee, and, like Murdoch, rich—"vulgarly rich," Miss Mangler told him. "Do you see her ear-rings? They say she was his housekeeper once!"

"Well, if one must be vulgar, I should rather be vulgarly rich than vulgarly poor," answered Bradford, amiably. She was unable to restrain a sharp look. At the time he fancied that he had scored on The Curse; but he came to regret the remark later.

The dinner was exceedingly good, and two maids served it exceedingly well. Bradford was taking care of Marion Craven, and should have enjoyed himself. Moments of pleasure he did have, as he saw Clarges punctiliously attentive to the translated housekeeper, if such she were, while the spare trustee, from Marion Craven's other side, watched him jealously, inattentive to the conversa-

AMY IS WARNED

tion of Miss Mangler. But a tremendous centre-piece hid Amy from Bradford's view, which annoyed him. He could see Dr. Craven, whose tired face brightened with a fatherly smile as he talked, but he could hear nothing of what they said, though, like the spare trustee, he strained his ears. At last Marion sat back in her chair with an air of finality, and Bradford turned to face her guiltily.

"I don't blame you a particle," she said. "I should do the same in your place. But really, Mr. Bradford, you ought to trust me; you ought to throw yourself on my mercy. I asked you three times in succession whether you preferred pie or Swinburne, and twice you said, 'Yes, indeed,' and once, 'Oh, are you sure?' Now, I ask you seriously whether acting like that would deceive anybody?"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Marion," he answered, in some confusion.

"You needn't. I tell you I sympathize with you altogether; only, as I say, you ought to trust me. Who knows but that I might help you in some way? You know what the mouse did for the lion?"

THE CHAMELEON

“What do you want me to trust you in?”

“Oh, well, if you are going to ask that, I shall merely go back to pie and Swinburne. No, I shall not; I shall desert you altogether, as I ought, and talk to Mr. Gaines, who is worried because he thinks the minister is flirting with his wife. Who is that minister, Mr. Bradford? Do you know him?”

“Yes, in a way. I have seen him pretty often.”

“Here?”

“Sometimes here.”

“Is he really making love to Mrs. Gaines?”

“No; his abilities are engaged in another direction, I assure you.”

Marion Craven nodded. “Well,” she added, “which do you choose—confession, or abandonment?”

“You are right, as usual,” he admitted, after a pause.

“Should you like to change seats? I can see her from here; she is looking very well to-night.”

“No, thanks; I can see your father, and he is looking very well, too.”

Marion's face clouded a little. “Poor old

AMY IS WARNED

father! I wish he were, Mr. Bradford. But you are a nice sort of lover to have round the house—willing to put up with the president of a college when you might be watching Her!”

“If I must surrender entirely,” returned Bradford, “you know very well I would rather be watching Her.”

Miss Craven clapped her hands softly. “I wondered if you would be honest! And now, to reward you—I shall let you talk about Her to me.”

Murdoch was in high spirits—higher than usual. He proposed a toast to Dr. Craven; and another to the future of Carfax College. Over the latter he grew almost boisterous, and winked at old Barrett, while the lawyer regarded him with an amused, uncomprehending stare. If Bradford had been noticing, just then, he might have connected the act with the speech Murdoch had made to him once about expansion, and been freshly sure that Carfax was likely to witness a revolution. But he and Marion were by this time deep in talk, and neither of them observed. The minister wondered a little, but the matter was out of his field, and he soon ceased to think of it. Clarges was solving a puzzle

THE CHAMELEON

of his own. He had arrived before Bradford did, and so witnessed Amy's reception of the young man. Moreover, he was not so engrossed in his attentions to the portly and bediamonded Mrs. Gaines as not to notice Bradford's preoccupation. He had not, of late, seen the two together very often—Bradford and Amy. He had no way of knowing how matters stood between them. Tonight, as he watched them, he began to doubt whether he was wholly right in his estimate of the outcome of their relations. He felt certain that Amy cared for Bradford; he began to wonder if Bradford did not care more for Amy than he had supposed. Hitherto, Clarges had thought that Bradford's feeling for Amy was merely fancy; possessed of no more depth than half the airy theories Bradford often propounded, merely for amusement or the attraction of attention: that Bradford liked her because she obviously liked him. The possibility began to dawn upon him now, that Bradford was in earnest at last; felt at last a real emotion; loved Amy because he could not help loving her. And Clarges groaned in spirit. This made no easier for Amy the tragedy which must

AMY IS WARNED

inevitably follow their marriage, if married they were; it only increased the tragedy to Bradford.

When dinner was over, and the men had joined the ladies—which was soon, for the spare trustee was obviously uneasy out of his wife's company—Clarges said to Amy, in his odd, abrupt fashion,

“I want to talk to you a little. May I?”

“Why not?”

“Then come here, Amy.” He drew her away, and after a moment's hesitation she followed. Bradford, with a pang like a sword, watched them go. She cared nothing for him, he thought; this hypocritical, sneering minister satisfied her entirely. Miss Mangler began to talk to him, and he answered her savagely enough to satisfy even her love for acrid condemnation of the world. They talked of Carfaxians; and Bradford flung out at them left and right, while she applauded his brutality until he had almost forgotten his ill-humor and forgiven her for existence.

Meanwhile Clarges and the girl faced each other, Amy indifferently, Clarges outwardly as usual, but with a sombre, unquiet light in his eyes which showed the fires within him.

THE CHAMELEON

"Amy," he said, abruptly, when they were alone, "why do you hate me?"

"Must we talk about each other?" she asked, but without pleading. He nodded stubbornly. "I don't hate you," she continued, wearily. "I don't think about you."

"Put it as you please," he answered. "You don't like me. Is it because I show you that I love you?"

She shivered a little, but she neither rose nor answered. After a moment, he went on, "You must have seen that. Yet I have never told you of it. I resolved never to insult you by telling you, since I dared not marry you. Now I have broken my resolve; but only because I was sure you disliked me, and would not grieve to think that I had suffered."

"I do dislike you," she answered, raising her eyes to meet his. "I do not think I have done anything to you which deserves this insult from you. If you have quite finished, we will go back. And please do not speak to me again, Father Clarges."

"I will not," he answered, under his breath,

AMY IS WARNED

“after I have finished this once. Amy, tell me, tell me—I will swear to you on my knees if you want—tell me that you do not care for—that man yonder; for Bradford? Promise me you will not marry him! It would be certain unhappiness to both of you—certain, certain! Think what you please of me; think that I am merely trying to slander a better man than I am; think that I am the meanest and lowest man on earth, but believe me when I say it would be certain unhappiness for him as well as for you—if he loves you! You cannot help seeing what I mean! You cannot help seeing that he does not ring true, and that you do! You cannot believe him sincere and genuine in all he does, as the man who marries you must be! You cannot, I say——”

She had heard him so far with a paling face. Now she rose. “I think you must be ill,” she interrupted, curtly; “ill, or mad. Will you let me pass, Father, or shall I call to my uncle?”

He stood aside and bowed, and she hurried by him. She paused a moment in the doorway to calm herself; then she walked across to where Bradford and Miss Mangler were sitting; walked

THE CHAMELEON

as steadily and quietly as when she had moved out to dinner on Dr. Craven's arm. Bradford, with a recurrence of hope, saw her come back alone, and jumped up to make room for her.

"We were discussing the statue of Garibaldi in the Pantheon at Rome," said Miss Mangler, with a quick glance at Bradford. "I was just saying to Mr. Bradford that to see it there gave one such a feeling of the tolerance of the Italian in political matters, hot-headed as he is; and he quite agrees with me. By the way, I have forgotten—where does it stand, Mr. Bradford—to the right or left of Victor Emmanuel's tomb?"

Bradford for the life of him could recollect no statue of Garibaldi in the Pantheon, but Miss Mangler was a student of Roman history, and never made mistakes. "To the right, I think, but I am not sure," he answered.

"You remember the statue, of course?"

"Oh, perfectly."

Miss Mangler's eye was full of triumph now. "Now that I recall," she said, musingly, "is it in the Pantheon, though? Isn't it on that open space back of the Colosseum?"

AMY IS WARNED

“Perhaps there is one there; I don’t seem to remember.”

“But you are perfectly sure, you say, of the one in the Pantheon?”

Bradford, half-amused and half-fearful, since Amy was there, saw Miss Mangler’s little game, and blocked it by impudence. “Yes; quite sure.”

She turned with fresh zest to the minister, who was just then in the doorway.

“Father Clarges, do you remember any statue of Garibaldi in the Pantheon? Is there one there? Mr. Bradford assures us he has seen it, though, so of course there must be.”

Clarges saw the malice sparkling in her look, and bowed gravely, while Bradford began rapidly planning how to pass his statement lightly off. “He is quite right,” answered the rector, “according to the best of my recollection, Miss Mangler.”

Bradford could scarcely believe his ears.

Chapter Thirteen

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

"It's very curious," said Miss Craven, earnestly, "but I do like you; yes, I do." She looked at Amy solemnly.

Amy pondered. "I suppose it *is* curious," she admitted, thoughtfully, "but other people have liked me, Miss Craven."

"You are an adorable child!" cried Miss Craven. "As if anyone could help liking you! I only meant that it was curious in my case, because—because—well, you know why."

"I don't," answered Amy. "No; I don't."

"You," explained Miss Craven, "have an uncle, while I have a father."

There was obvious bewilderment in Miss Power's eye.

"Well!" Marion answered her look. "Don't you know that your uncle stands for one set of

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

theories, and my father for another? Your uncle is in a hurry; he wants to run, and my father is too—too careful—to run. He would rather walk. And then your uncle thinks he is only crawling. And so—” She spread her hands in a dramatic gesture.

“Do you mean,” Miss Power asked, with her customary directness, “that they don’t get on well—your father and Uncle Jack? Don’t they like each other?”

Miss Craven, thus reduced to particularity, laughed again. “No,” she admitted, “I don’t mean that. I think your uncle is fond of my father, and I know that the Doctor respects Mr. Murdoch very highly. Of course we all do. They are as friendly as—as can be. But after all, you know, they are looking two different ways; they want different things; and one of them has got to give in.”

“What different things?”

Marion regarded her with amused eyes, in which a trace of pity lingered. “Don’t you know why your uncle was put on the board of trustees?” she asked.

THE CHAMELEON

“Uncle Jack never talks to me about business.”

“Well! He represents a lot of people who think my father ought to give up the presidency.”

Said Amy, simply, “I don’t believe it.”

Miss Craven wagged her head. “Ah, my dear, but it’s true, though it’s not usually put in just that way, and though perhaps even your uncle doesn’t see it so. There are a great many people in Carfax who want a different sort of college here. No; I don’t know what kind they want; I don’t believe—saving your presence, child—they do either. But I know this—Carfax College is the kind of college my father loves and understands, and the only kind he is willing to be at the head of. He isn’t a beggar; he can’t go out and wrench money from people, like an Italian with a hand-organ.” Miss Craven’s voice was not without scorn and bitterness. “He is only a scholar and a gentleman, and that, it seems, isn’t enough nowadays in a college president.”

“I hope you don’t mean,” said Amy, with her fatal feminine instinct for the *reductio ad personam*, “that Uncle Jack is not a gentleman, because he is a business-man.”

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

“A million times no!” cried Miss Craven. She cried it all the more eagerly because of a little subconsciousness that she might have meant exactly that. “A million times no! I like your uncle immensely. That is another curious thing. I don’t *want* to like him, for I know that he is bound to have his way sooner or later. Father is only standing still, I suppose. He is standing on solid ground, and nobody quite knows where all the people who want to progress are going to progress to. But they will get their progress, of course. All I hope is that it won’t come just yet.”

“But if it’s bound to come some time?” Amy Power was incapable of understanding a person who could not bravely face the future, good or bad.

“It needn’t come in father’s time,” Miss Craven answered, obstinately. “He isn’t a young man any more. He has lived his whole life in the college, and for the college, and if they turn him out now, I call it downright inhuman.”

“But they won’t turn him out,” objected Amy. “Why should they? Anybody can get money, if that is what they need; I’m sure Uncle Jack could

THE CHAMELEON

give them any amount, if he chose. If they all want a larger college, and that seems to be what you mean, why shouldn't they give the money to Dr. Craven, and let that end it? "

Dr. Craven's daughter smiled a little sadly. "They think that he is an old man, dear. They think that he is behind the times. They think that even if he had the money, he couldn't take care of it; and so nobody will give it. They are quite right. It would frighten my father to be dealing in millions, such as colleges are getting nowadays. He would not know what to do. But," she went on, rapidly, eagerly, "why need they have this new university this year or next? That is what I can't see. There is plenty of time. My father has taken plenty of responsibility for the college; hasn't the college any responsibility toward him? Hasn't he deserved anything for all the years he has worked? Suppose they are right, and he is old-fashioned and slow—he's given his life unselfishly, and it would kill him if they told him to go now, like a servant who is too old to work."

"They never will!" said Amy, positively.

"Yes, they will—if they can." Miss Craven

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

opened and shut her eyes rapidly several times, to wink away a tear. Then she leaned forward, smiling brilliantly. "Why am I talking so absurdly? You are actually looking downhearted, Amy. I beg your pardon, my dear. It slipped out. Do you mind if I call you Amy?"

"I wish you would, please."

"Well then, I will—Amy. I chatter like an old woman as I am, all about my own concerns, and never a word of yours. What have you been doing?"

"The same things all winter."

"Has it been long?"

"Not very."

"Let me see." Miss Craven appeared to meditate. "I have seen you five—no, six times. Once I called with Isabelle, and someone came—to bring a book, *he* said. Twice you have been to tea on Thursdays; both times someone else was there. Once we went skating—four of us. Once we were here at dinner. And now I'm calling on you, and no one else is here. Is there anything in this recital, my dear Amy, to cause a blush—that blush which I seem to see?"

THE CHAMELEON

“Nothing.” The blush was very faint, if it was there at all.

“And you haven’t any particular reason to give a friend why the winter hasn’t been long?”

“Oh, yes. I have been busy; and it has been pleasant to know more people—you, for example, Miss Craven. I never went out much before this winter.”

“Don’t you know that my friends call me Marion?”

“I should like to be a friend, too.”

“Too—what?”

“To Miss Craven.”

Marion Craven laughed. She really laughed a great deal. “Amy,” she said, “I am thirty-four years old. I have been engaged to three men. The first time was in the moonlight. Afterward I lay awake all that night, and next day I wrote and told him I had been mistaken; I was not in love with him, but with the moon. So he forgave me. The second one—well, never mind him, dear.” Her voice softened regretfully. “I treated him badly, I’m afraid. Yet what could I do, when I found out? The third was Platonic. We under-

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

stood, both of us, that, if we saw anyone else we preferred, we were free. Meanwhile, he was to play no more poker, which was bad for him. When he came and told me about another girl that he had met—as he did—the only thing I said was, ‘And the poker?’ He looked at me reproachfully. So I gave them both my blessing; and that was the end of him. *Now* will you tell me about Mr. Bradford?”

“I have nothing to tell.”

“My dear, don’t you know he’s in love with you?”

“I think he likes me.”

“And?”

“There is no and. He hasn’t told me so.”

“But what shall you say when he does?”

“I’ll tell you—” Amy paused.

“Well?”

“When I’ve told him.”

Chagrin, curiosity, and amusement struggled for expression in Miss Craven’s face, and amusement conquered. “Amy,” she said, soberly, “I never hesitated to talk about *my* men. From which I judge——”

THE CHAMELEON

“What?” asked Miss Power, unwarily.

“That I never was really in love,” finished Miss Craven. And this time the blush was plainer to be seen in Miss Power’s face. Miss Craven smiled. “I must be going.”

“I wish you would stay.”

“My dear, I wish I might. But I only came, after all, to bring Isabelle’s excuses. She goes out so little, now; we don’t like to leave the Doctor alone any more than we can help. In the first place, he’s not feeling very, *very* well, and in the second, he’s grown so absent-minded that I am certain he has already patted the wood-box and put the cat into the fire. Good-by, Amy. It *is* curious—but I certainly do like you.”

At dinner that evening, Amy told her uncle of Miss Craven’s call. “She is nice, Uncle Jack. I think she is funny.”

“She’s the finest old maid in Carfax.”

“She isn’t old to look at.”

“She’s no spring chicken, Amy; she’s older than she looks. What did she have to say?”

“Nothing especial. We talked a little about the college.”

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

“Did she have any news for you?”

“No, sir.”

The pickle-maker leaned back, shoving his hands into his trousers pockets. He liked to sit so at the end of a meal, and let his big chest expand while he looked about the dining-room and revelled silently in the consciousness of his own success. In his own phrase, he got down to the sugar in such moments. Relieved of the instant necessity of toil, he could cast his eyes back over what he had accomplished, like a ploughman at the end of a long furrow. At last he said,

“Well, I have some for you.”

“Yes?” She was pouring hot water into a receptacle like the inverted top of an hour-glass. Now she reversed it, and let the water strain through the orifice. Murdoch’s coffee in the evening Amy always made.

“Amy, girl, do you know I’m a rich man?”

She glanced up, surprised. “Why, I hadn’t thought much about it, Uncle Jack. But of course, I supposed so.”

“A—pretty—rich—man. Do you know how rich a man has to be to think of giving away ten

THE CHAMELEON

million dollars?" His voice lingered caressingly on the last words, as a violinist sighs his whole heart into the last strain of his sonata, or a sculptor draws the reverent cloth from the masterpiece of his art. And he had from Amy the long, astonished look he coveted.

"To give away—ten million!"

The pickle-maker pursed his lips and nodded, not looking at his niece. Oh, the pride and self-control in that little nod!

"But," she asked, after a moment, in a puzzled voice, "why *should* you give it away, Uncle Jack?" Her feminine mind was lost in the vastness of the sum. Although she was far from imaginative, she saw the whole world spinning with silver dollars, and greedy hands clutching at each. It never occurred to her that her uncle meant to bestow the mass in a lump.

"The college needs it, and I've got it to give."

"The college!"

"Yes, child. It's for the college, of course. I've been thinking of it for a long time."

She looked at him fixedly. She was recalling what Marion Craven had said that afternoon. He

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

fancied she was waiting for details, and he poured them out like water.

“ You see, Amy, we’ve been running behind here at Carfax. When I go out and meet men from Yale and Harvard, and tell them I come from Carfax College, they wonder where it is. Nobody has heard of it, you might say, outside the State. It rubs along with the old buildings, and now and then a new library, or something of the sort, and every year it has maybe ten more men in the freshman class than the year before, and that’s the end. It’s a fine old college, and I love it, and I wouldn’t tear down one of those old buildings if I had to spend ten thousand bracing the walls till they’d hold up the ivy. But it can’t stand still this way; it’s either got to grow, or it’s got to die, one or the other, like all the rest of us. We’ve got to swim or we’ve got to sink, my dear; and by the Lord Harry, we’re going to swim! You understand, I have only given them the endowment, not the principal; that stays in my hands for the present, though they get it outright when I die. But I can turn over a good, solid seven per cent.” He spoke proudly, as well he might. “ Seven hun-

THE CHAMELEON

dred thousand dollars a year Carfax College is to spend. There aren't a great many incomes like that, Amy. She'll have the endowment she has already, and she'll have some income from tuition, and she'll have my money; and it'll foot up to precious near a million a year. What can't they have for that money? They can have a technical school, and a law school, and a school for sawbones, and then put a lot into buildings to keep the students in. There'll be plenty, I fancy, with a million a year. Carfax will be the biggest thing in the country, Amy; no doubt of it. She's only waiting for the word. And the contract is all ready—signed, sealed, and—well, it ain't delivered yet, but it's going to be soon, now. I just wanted to tell you first, you see. There are a few details, but they'll soon be fixed. The Murdoch Fund, it's to be called. The Murdoch Fund. I reckon that will make a noise when it gets into the newspapers—eh, Amy? And it's to be as free as air to them. I haven't tied it up with conditions. I ain't the sort of man that gives with his right hand and takes away with his left. We must find the right man to spend it, and then he gets the loot—seven

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

hundred thousand dollars a year, cash down on the nail. Little over eleven years ago it was I began the business. I fought along for two years, and then you came, little girl, and fetched the luck with you. More than a million to give away for every year since then. How does *that* sound, Amy? By the Lord Harry—by the Lord Harry, I say, my dear, I think I've done pretty well, eh?"

Put two marks of exclamation after the question; put three. This was the reward of Murdoch's labors. To say these things, in this tone, to his niece, and to the world, was John Murdoch's triumph. He spent fifteen hundred a year on himself, fifteen thousand on his niece and his house—and the rest, so far as it was merely money, he cared no more for than the dust in the street. He would have liked to spend thirty thousand on Amy instead of fifteen, but he did not know how. He was a man who tipped a porter five dollars, where other men gave a quarter. Was there ostentation in him? Not the least of the least. He had the money, and he spent it happily, gleefully. When the bucket runs over, it is a mean man who watches the drops. This speech of Murdoch's was his

THE CHAMELEON

pæan, his song of victory, his Io triumphe! He thrust his hands deeper into his trousers pockets. The gesture was the only expression he could think of for the emotion which ruled him. The pickle-maker was a king—a modern king; and royally he looked upon the world.

“Here is your coffee, dear.” Amy seldom called him so; Murdoch knew that she was glad with him.

“Uncle Jack?”

“Yes, Amy?”

“Does nobody else know about this yet?”

“Only old Barrett, my dear.”

“Do you mean to give it to the college right away?”

Murdoch's face clouded a little. “Amy,” he said, with perceptible hesitation, “you don't think I'm ungenerous to you, giving this away, do you? Why, little girl, you're my luck, you know; you've always been my luck, since you came to me, with your short dresses and your long legs. Always, Amy, girl. You don't think I ain't looking out for you, do you?”

She rose, and came round to him. “Sit so,” she commanded. She sat upon his lap, and put

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

her arm around his neck. "Uncle, dear," she said, "do you think I'm only joking when I tell you I love you?"

"No, I don't, Amy."

"Well, then. Isn't the money yours? You got it; I never even knew where. I know that I have had more of it than I could use. If you told me you were all of a sudden poor, I could stand that very easily, couldn't I? You needn't be afraid for me. But——"

"Well, Amy?"

"I was only thinking—of Dr. Craven."

If Amy herself had not been where she was, and Amy's arm had not been lying on his shoulder, the pickle-maker might have said something stronger than "Craven again!" For, when one really desires and is determined to do a generous thing, it is certainly trying to find an insignificant obstacle always in the way.

"Yes, Uncle Jack. When you give this ten million—think of it! ten million!!—when you give it, Dr. Craven will leave, you know."

"And suppose he does, Amy?"

"Won't he think it's rather—cruel?"

THE CHAMELEON

“Cruel?” The pickle-maker spoke with vehemence. “He’ll be a doddering old fool if he does, Amy. It’s all arranged about Craven; he’s to have a pension of—oh, whatever he wants; four thousand, if he’ll take that much. That’ll be all right, won’t it? He can’t ask more than that?” For Amy’s sake, Murdoch made his answer as gentle as he could; though secretly he was hurt that his own niece should fail to appreciate his benefaction more highly, he would not let her see it. But Amy’s vision was at once clear and narrow. When her eyes were opened upon a matter, she could neither close them to it, nor easily see it from another angle. Now the vision of the old Doctor was vivid to her; she saw him as his daughter had pictured him.

“He is an old man, Uncle Jack.”

“Sixty-six or seven, I reckon.”

“If you had built up a business, would you want to leave it when you were sixty-six or seven, and take a pension, Uncle Jack?”

Murdoch stirred uneasily. The point of view was not new to him. But what could he do? Are we to delay the car of Progress because its wheels

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

run over an old scholar? The idea is patently absurd. Such is not the law of the road. In other words, and still gently, he showed her this. But still she was unsatisfied and persistent.

“He isn’t very strong, Uncle Jack; Miss Craven told me so to-day.”

“She stretched it, likely.” Murdoch was trying not to lose his temper.

“Uncle Jack!”

“Well; maybe I shouldn’t have said that. But—” He relapsed into silence.

“Dear, couldn’t you put this off for a year? Nobody knows about it but us. Would a year make much difference?”

“Amy!”

“I was only wondering. Of course, I suppose you couldn’t.”

“But what good would that do?”

“Dr. Craven might find that he wasn’t able to carry on the work, and resign. That wouldn’t make it seem to him as if he were driven out, you see. If you told him about this right away, of course he would go, but everything would be so different to him, wouldn’t it?”

THE CHAMELEON

Murdoch drew himself together, and pondered while his niece sat quietly on his knee. In his mind's eye he saw the flaring headlines which announced his enormous gift:

TEN MILLION DOLLAR GIFT OF JOHN MURDOCH

WELL-KNOWN MANUFACTURER DONATES TEN MILLION DOLLARS TO CARFAX COLLEGE, HIS ALMA MATER. SKETCH OF THE BENEFACTOR'S LIFE

One of the sweetest drops in Murdoch's cup was the quickness of his success. Now every month he delayed made his announcement more commonplace. Soon he would be forty years old, and perhaps no one would know of his generosity and ability by then! He sat in silence long, long minutes, with Amy's fingers in his own. She waited, ready to accept unquestionably his decision; she believed in her uncle, as he knew.

"All right, little girl, for a year, then," he said.

"I think it will be nicer so, dear." Those were

A GIRL AND TEN MILLION

all his thanks. She failed entirely to appreciate the strength of his desire and the measure of his sacrifice. Her nature was as simple and clear as her gray eyes. To Amy Power, even at nineteen, a situation was something to be faced, finished, forgotten. She saw always two paths stretching out before her; one was right to choose, one was wrong. Happy Amy! So, therefore, because Marion Craven happened to call that day, and a girl's nature happened to be sweet, and a strong man happened to be great-hearted, the progress of education must be delayed a while; the ten million dollars which was to put Carfax College where it belonged, must remain for a time unheralded. It is a tremendous sum, ten million dollars. An empire has been wrecked by a desire for less. And yet there are greater matters—simple human kindness, for example.

Chapter Fourteen

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

May days in Carfax. Buds turning into blossoms, wind sparkling on the river, a wild largess of sunshine, and the last gray goose gone north. Oh, the hint and promise in the cherries! Oh, the bright gold of the dandelions! Oh, the small Irish lads unclothed and shivering to the first chilly plunge! Oh, the quintessential sweetness of the year!

So one might think. But modern America desires in her cities no such glory. Celebrate instead the slush, clogging the high-piled van which moves from undesirable house to undesirable flat. Sing rather the long-drawn, unintelligible scream which heralds the approach of the rag-and-bottle-man—or is it the Italian with strawberries? Who knows till he comes in sight? Groan lamentably with the lamentable groaning of the street-piano and its Neapolitan parasites—what a taste the Latin

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

nations have in torture since the Spanish inquisition! Cry aloud of the bargain sale, and the lawn-sprinklers, and newly spread ingathering banana-peel. These are the signs of May in Carfax. Amy fled them, going to Murdoch's country place, where she liked the stillness and the trees; and there, one Saturday afternoon, Murdoch took Bradford, too. The pickle-maker never thought of asking his niece whether or not he should bring the young man. He liked Bradford, and rather fancied Amy did, and what other chaperon than liking could be desired? Any author, writing short stories of society for seven dollars a page, could have told him glibly of his error, had he but asked. Bradford went with joy and hesitation. He hoped, he wondered; sometimes he only feared. When Amy Power saw the two drive up, in the early twilight, she thought—who may say what a maid thinks, whose eyes are clear and gray as water in a spring, and whose face is untroubled by a line? Not Bradford, at least, could tell.

The pickle-maker's country house was a rambling, one-storied, slate-colored bungalow, standing on the roll of a wide and shallow hill. To the

THE CHAMELEON

north and east pine-woods clustered right up to the house, the great trees solemnly looking down upon the house, and in a wind leaning over to drop cones down the chimneys. South and west sloped the lawn, broad and riotous in flowers, and ended in both directions at the river, which here swung round a curve. The river was six feet deep and ninety wide, and ran full and strong like a race-horse. Beyond the river again, reached by two log-buttressed bridges, the land climbed to a ridge, and all the pines seemed hurrying to the top to look over. Thus, it is plain, on all sides the pattering stillness of the forest shut in the clearing.

An elderly grumbler by the name of Lowton lived at the place, and with his daughter and two grandsons, aged respectively five and nine, took care of it in winter. He was wholly independent in speech, but as faithful as a watch-dog, if he were given his leave to growl. He growled in particular at the woods. Bradford, fraternizing with him, thought to please him by remarking on the beauty of the place, but Lowton could not agree.

“There ain’t a speck of cut wood on the place,”

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

he declared, "that's fit to burn, an' yet miles of trees right on top of us! Mr. Murdoch, he won't have a one cut, an' why? He's so fond of his darned old blooming Nature, ez he calls it, that he wants 'em all to stand. 'There's lots of dead trees fallen,' he sez; 'jest use them, Lowton.' How kin I use them? Rotten wood won't burn; 's agin Nature. It's all right fer you folks in summer, with the sun a-shinin' and the river dancin' and your old Nature jest a-caperin' like a young calf, but you'd oughto be here in winter and watch her prance! Them old snags behind the house there" (Lowton referred to the majestic pines) "'ith their tops all full of snow, a-bowin' and a-bendin'—by gosh, ever' time the wind comes up, an' it always *is* up, I kin jest hear 'em snap! Then crash! 'll go one off in the woods som'ers, and me expectin' ever' night that one'll slosh down onto the house and cut our beds right clean in two. How'd you like a four-foot pine fallin' on your bed? Where's your old Nature then? I swear to gosh hang I won't stay here another winter like last—yes, sir, I swear to gosh hang. You wait a minnit, an' I'll show you somethin'."

THE CHAMELEON

“He says the same thing every year,” observed Amy. “But he always stays.”

“Look a’ here,” said Lowton, coming back. “You wanto see what sort of winters we get here? That there’s a calendar for March, an’ I put down every day right there what happened. You look at that, an’ then you talk about Nature.”

“You had troubles of your own, sure enough!” said Bradford. “Look, Miss Power.” And he showed her Lowton’s curiosity of annotation. Each day had its comment.

March 4.—snow

“ 5.—snow

“ 6.—set one hen

“ 7.—snow

“ 8.—rain and snow

“ 9.—perfectly lovely

“ 10.—set hen

“ 11.—snow and rain

“ 12.—heavens will it ever quit

“ 13.—rain

“ 14.—one hen off spoiled thirteen eggs
drat her

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

March 15.—rain

“ 16.—fair day

“ 17.—fair day.

“ 18.—bad cold and snow oh well

“Thank you,” said Bradford, choking. He returned the calendar to Lowton and fled behind the house. “Christian resignation!” he proclaimed to Amy. “Christian resignation! It ought to be framed!” And that final heart-broken “oh well” made even Amy laugh.

Sunday morning was consecrated to Murdoch. The pickle-maker led Bradford everywhere, expatiating in the pride of ownership. He exhibited horses and a cow, chickens and miniature falls, pigeons and a distant hill all purple in the haze, the river and the bridges, all the rooms in the house, and a new wagon-brake of his own invention; and he filled in with praises of the pines. Murdoch revelled in his pines; he gloated over the huge ones, telling fabulous stories of their height and age, and mourned like Damon over some ancient Pythias he found lying prostrated by the wind. There was a real religious fervor in the man; he

THE CHAMELEON

might have been a Druid at his worship, save for the keen proprietary interest that intensified his happiness. He kept Bradford busy with his unconscious demands for exclamation; and Bradford exclaimed with such fineness and propriety of feeling that the pickle-maker heard him affectionately.

Dinner was served in the largest room of the house, a room whose wide south windows looked upon the lawn and the river running below. Murdoch supplied the talk. In a pause of it Bradford let his eyes wander idly toward the stream. It flowed dark against the green; as he saw it he was reminded suddenly of the river he had visioned in the church, the river which sprang out of nothing and divided him from Amy. But a small figure appeared upon the bank, before which symbolism fled. It was Lowton's youngest grandchild, dressed in strapped blue overalls, laboriously picking daisies. He somehow made Bradford aware that the sun was full upon the slope, and the air quiet and warm, and the surroundings not of a sort to encourage allegory. Much of the day, Bradford reflected, had been quite wasted, for he had

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

got hardly a glimpse of Amy since breakfast-time. He stole a glance at her small head, with the dark-brown hair drawn to some sort of picturesque knot upon it. He drew a long breath with the ecstasy of his delight in the simple line of her cheek and throat, outlined against the window. Then, as she turned her eyes toward him, he let his wander quickly away toward the river again. The sun was as full, and warm, and pleasant, and sleepy, as before; but Bradford's chair clattered on the floor as he sprang up and rushed to the door.

"What is it?" the other two cried together.

"The kid's in the river!" shouted Bradford. In an instant he was running hard across the lawn, with no time for anything but the comforting realization that he had acted rapidly. He reached the spot. Ten yards down the stream the baby's face was white on the water. The swift sullenness of the current might have easily daunted him, but it did not. He ran along the bank, dived in, and had the child in his grasp before he realized the power of the water. It was fed by the snows, and its chill was so instant that he cried out. It caught at his heart and cramped his muscles. He felt it

THE CHAMELEON

binding his chest as rigid as an iron bar, and when he tried to take a stroke his legs were powerless and disobedient. He half-released the child, vainly feeling for the bottom; then his fingers tightened again. By God, with her looking on, he would die game! They were setting out into the middle now; he could not tell whether he had been in that frightful cold ten seconds or ten minutes, but he felt that his chances were going with his strength, and wondered how soon he should begin to choke, and know that the end was coming. Then—they were at the lower bridge, and Murdoch, leaning away down, clutched him and held on. Bradford passed over the boy, whom Murdoch lifted with his free hand. The next instant they were both safely on the bridge. The dripping baby burst into a monstrous wail.

“I—want—my—f’owers,” he said. Surely enough, the daisies were careering down the stream.

“Well, it was a lucky thing for that kid you saw him go in,” cried Murdoch, heartily. “He might have been drowned, like as not. Pity you’ve spoiled your clothes, though.”

“I’ve got another suit at the house,” answered

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

Bradford, blushing shamefacedly, as he estimated the distance from the bridge to the spot where the child had fallen in. It was perhaps forty yards. The size of the river seemed to diminish as he stared at it.

When Bradford came downstairs again he had recovered his equanimity. The pickle-maker had disappeared somewhere. Amy was sitting on the piazza, gazing at the river where it rippled in the sun. He stood in the doorway and watched her. She was wearing gray again. Oh, color of the silver shining moss, of hills at sundown, and of Amy's eyes! Her breast rose and fell. The curling tendrils of her hair clung dark against her neck's whiteness. The roundness of her figure was as delicately imperious as the challenge of the spring. She was a girl-woman—"the sweetest thing God ever made."

When a boy loves a woman, to him is given to see in her only what he wishes there. Slowly the man learns that what is written is written. Bradford stared at her long; he observed the steady, firm line of the chin, the little determined, downward droop of the mouth, the clear, high arching

THE CHAMELEON

of the eyebrows, and all those signs which had whispered so truly to the rector—"we are strong!" To Bradford they whispered only, "We are sweet!" Had he heard their other message—well, what then? Nothing then. He was in love, and it would have whistled down the wind.

He stepped forward. "Thinking, Miss Power?"

She sprang up, her face alight, and all the delicate hardness gone. "Oh, Mr. Bradford! It was brave of you!"

"It was really nothing at all. Your uncle did most of it."

"My uncle! He would have been too late."

"At least you can guess that I like to hear you say so."

"Anyone would say so, Mr. Bradford. You thought just what to do. If you had not—think what might have happened!"

He sat down by her in silence, thinking of his thoughts in that moment when he had exaggeratedly given himself up for lost. He said nothing of these to her; but in a moment he asked, "Will you come for a walk?"

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

“ Yes,” she said.

“ I know a beautiful place—we saw it this morning. You ought to know it, too, I should think; at least your uncle called it Amy’s Bower. Shall we go there? ”

“ Yes,” she said. She did not quite know what she was saying or doing or feeling. A new sense had come over her with a great sweep, an emotion like the rush of the river, bearing her on and on and on. She did not wish to resist. She gave herself up to it, as confidently, as happily, as only strong natures can yield. The ineffable delight of surrender was in her soul. They reached the Bower almost in silence; only the crying of the blue-jays in the woods disturbed their thoughts.

The Bower was a spot beside one of the two brooks which fed the river. Leaf-bearing trees, the only group among the pines, watched there beside a pool, and the sunshine lay lazily upon the grass just beyond their shade. Bradford spread a shawl for her carefully, and she sat down, right by the edge of the water, where, he told her, she might look in, like Narcissus, until she fell in love with her own shadow there. But she looked up at

THE CHAMELEON

him instead, and he forgot Narcissus, and lay down beside her on a corner of the shawl. The sun gleamed.

"It's almost June," she ventured, slowly.

"Almost." He wondered—what was she thinking now?

"I like this spot so much, they named it for me."

"It is beautiful." Would she like it still, if he asked her—asked her——

"Did you know this brook had an Indian name?" she questioned, dreamily.

"No. What is it?" Am I really afraid?

"Tu-see-alusa."

"What does that mean?" Oh, take your courage in both hands, faintheart!

"The stream of white water."

"I can see why they named it that." She does not care at all for me; she is not thinking of me; she is thinking only of the hateful woods and the brook!

"Yes; it is foamy up above. But it is very still just here."

"As still as your eyes—almost." *Now* will she understand me?

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

Silence.

“ Amy ! ”

Silence.

“ Amy, don't you know that I love you ? ” Oh, fool, fool, he thought, to throw away even hope !

“ You really—love me ? ”

“ Oh, Amy, Amy, Amy ! ”

“ I am very—glad, dear. ” Still she sat with her face averted, looking into the water ; and her voice was so low that he feared he was dreaming, till he, too, looking into the water, and saw that she was crying silently. Then, with a surge of his heart, he took her in his arms, where he had longed to hold her, and kissed her eyes, her hair, her lips, as he had longed to kiss her. And she smiled at him through her tears, and thanked God.

Shall we never be done with hurrying to our joy, though we know so sorrowfully well how soon we must hurry away from it ? Or are we wiser than we know, and is delay so fatal to the capture of the rainbow's gold ?

“ Oh, little girl ! ”

She drew herself from him gently and sat up straight, the tears running down her face, and her

THE CHAMELEON

eyes still smiling through. "I don't know why I am so foolish," she told him, brokenly, "unless because I am—so very happy, dear! Are you?"

Was Bradford?

"Oh," she cried, "I thought you didn't care—you never told me!"

He had never told her! Had his eyes, his lips even, ever told her of anything else?

"But I thought—men always said those things to girls."

Not as he had said them. Men did not look at girls as he had looked at her.

"Oh," she cried, "teach me to tell you I love you so! It is all shut up here." She laid her hand upon her bosom while it rose and fell. "I can't speak. I thought that you must think I hated you—or something—because I was so dumb, and yet I couldn't say anything different. Shall I learn some day to tell you—how I love you?" She shook with her vehemence till Bradford was amazed. He soothed her, and whispered to her, till she grew calmer by and by. "I have never talked to anyone," she said. "I don't know how.

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

Why, I never had anything to say, till you came, dear! You are so clever—can you teach me a little? I feel—I feel as if there had been something in my heart that cried, cried, and nobody came; and now you’ve come. Ah, dear, I’m glad you’ve come!”

He teach her a little? He clever? He was not clever to-day, nor was he thinking of himself. He was humble and afraid. Already he loved her a thousand times more than he had dreamed before; and—was it for that reason he was afraid?

“You are so good to love me!” she told him. He good? He took her hands almost timidly, and showed her how white they were against his own. And that was her goodness and his. No; he was base, ill-tempered, ungenerous—so he was running on to enumerate all the bad qualities in the list except—ah, that exception we all make!—except the one he sometimes feared, when she drew her hands away, and laid her fingers lightly on his lips.

“Hush, dear!” she asked. “I can’t hear you speak so. You must hush. You are brave and strong and true. Oh, *I* know. I know what you have done. Don’t you remember the very first

THE CHAMELEON

time I ever saw you—when you sang to those poor people on the train? Was that ungenerous, and base, and ill-tempered? I pitied them all just as you did, but what could I do? I was too weak even to help with the hurt ones; I only sat there and cried, till you began to sing, and then somehow I felt, even when I could hardly hear you for the noises, that someone was there, strong and brave and steady, and things couldn't go *all* wrong."

"But, sweetheart. It isn't that I mean. I don't think I'm a coward. But——" He paused, unable to find words, and she interrupted him.

"A coward? Dear, do you remember a night when you made a speech to the men out at the college, and told them what was right, though you knew they would hate you for it? I think—I think that I began—ought I not to tell you that? And to-day, when you jumped in to get that little boy—do you think it was selfish and cowardly of you—do you know that I should have hated him always if you had been hurt?—do you think it was selfish and cowardly of you to do that? No, dear; you must just hush, please!"

Bradford heard her. There were many things he

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

might have told her then. Reproach him who can because he was silent. Alas, instead of remaining humble and afraid, he felt as he always felt when he was praised, and momentarily took her words for truth—poor young hero, who had so much to fight against that one can hardly deny him admiration even for the broken, unfinished effort he had made an instant before.

They sat there while the sun dropped and dipped, and the gray twilight crept slowly out of the woods and sprang on them suddenly; and Bradford listened to what not many of us are allowed to hear, and saw what few of us ever see. It is true that, when all is said, mankind is still pretty close to nature. There are few men and not many more women who will not stop to watch a bud unfolding to a flower. But to Bradford was given to watch the heart of a girl unfolding to the flower of womanhood. The sight is rare. Buds open naturally, but we have civilized the girls, until such as Amy do not, in the old simile, grow on every bush. She spoke to Bradford as freely as she thought—more freely than she had ever thought before. She did not know of the proverb that a woman should be

THE CHAMELEON

kissed, but a man crossed. She knew only that she had discovered love.

“Is it evening? Why, it can’t be evening! Well, come, Francis, and we will tell uncle.”

“Do you think that we had better, to-night?”

“He would see it anyway!” she laughed. But as they walked to the house, Bradford was not so confident as she. Amy was, presumably, heiress to millions, and he had a little more than three thousand dollars a year. Would Murdoch approve of him? Bradford reflected hopefully that the pickle-maker was a “self-made” man; and then uneasily that he had made himself very vigorous and direct. The blood came to the boy’s face as he thought what Murdoch might say. But perhaps he would only tell them to wait. Bradford scarcely feared more, certainly hoped no more than this. They two came up the lawn, in the Sunday evening peace which seems to lie even upon the open country. On the piazza was Murdoch, smoking and waiting for them. Bradford never in his life forgot the sheen of the sun in the low windows as they slowly approached. How should he begin? In what words should he frame his news? How account for his precipitation?

THE AWAKENING OF AMY

He had known Amy scarcely eight months altogether. Would Murdoch grow angry——

Amy's hand slipped into his. "Uncle—you see I have promised to marry Mr. Bradford."

"Hey? What?" The pickle-maker got up hastily.

"We love each other," she said, proudly and simply, looking up at Bradford. Murdoch stared into his eyes till Bradford almost winced. Into what depths of his nature did the older man see? Or did he see only the handsome face, the open look returning his. He held out a hand to each.

"That's good hearing," he cried, enthusiastically. "By the Lord Harry, but that's good hearing!"

Chapter Fifteen

MARRIAGE

The engagement was received with pretty general acclamations, and not many seriously objected to the announcement of their marriage for the coming August. There was no reason why they should wait. Amy made no pretence of coquetry. She was only twenty, but her mother had married as young, and so had Bradford's, which seemed sufficient. And Bradford had certainly no wish to wait; he was in love. The Barton case turned out fortunately, being won on the lines of attack he had laid down, and the Trinity promptly advanced his salary. With one thing and another, Bradford had forty-five hundred dollars a year. Could Amy live on forty-five hundred dollars a year? She could, she said, but she saw no necessity for doing so, nor did her uncle. He wished to continue his present policy of giving her all she wanted and a little more.

“You know, Francis,” she urged, “that I would

MARRIAGE

live anywhere with you, even in a hut"—and Amy meant her words, though her ideas of a hut were primitive—"but why should we not live with Uncle?" That made decision easy, and a speedy marriage wholly desirable. It would certainly be a shame to leave Murdoch in loneliness. So it appeared that Amy's life was outwardly to undergo little change, and Bradford was to take up the burden of living with the pickle-maker, a burden he had shuddered at in his imagination eight months before. The enormous lithographs, and the quotations of the Shakespeare brand, still ornamented not only the Carfax billboards, but the whole country, and accessible parts of Europe, as the business spread; but Bradford looked at them with more amusement and less asperity. He did not mind living with Murdoch now. Indeed, he had completely forgotten that inward vision of the thin-chested wife and the intolerable offspring.

Miss Craven, her eyes full of laughter, shook Amy gently. "You promised to tell me, you know, after you told him," she reminded. "Now, what did you say to him, Amy?"

"I told him that I loved him very much," an-

THE CHAMELEON

swered Amy, tranquilly. "And so I do. You wouldn't have me marry him otherwise?"

"Heaven send you told it to him more enthusiastically than that, or he'd never believe you; he'd go off and commit suicide," cried Miss Craven.

"I think he believes it, though."

Miss Craven looked her over critically. "What has come to you, my dear? You are a different woman from the one I made the acquaintance of last fall. Has *he* done it? And what has he done?"

"Loved me," said Amy, tranquilly again. She returned Marion's look, and the older woman threw her arms around her neck, and kissed her.

"Dear," she whispered, softly, "he will be very happy. And so will you." Miss Craven's eyes were wet.

Kate gave Bradford the solid grip of friendship. "I think you're lucky, old fellow. A man needs a woman to keep him up to the mark." He did not joke at all. But then he had been serious all winter—almost as serious as Slim. He was to take his degree in June, and Shedsy said it would be ten below zero, unless Kate cheered up a bit. Shedsy's

MARRIAGE

jocosity was, however, a trifle forced. The shadow of Woman fell across the Residuum, and made him shiver. The horse-haired boarding-houses, with their loneliness, seemed perilously near. He admitted, when Bradford took him to call on Amy, that she was charming, and he kept Bradford from perceiving any undertone of sorrow in his congratulations, but he lamented afresh to Slim. "I suppose," he ended, "that it multiplies their happiness, and it only subtracts a little from mine. I suppose I'm a d-dog in the manger. B-but I've always s-sympathized a little with that d-dog. Maybe he was only c-cross because there was n-nothing at all for him to eat. By and by he went away, and the r-rest got what they wanted, but what b-became of him? Oh, he only starved to d-death in some c-corner, I suppose."

"How did you like her?"

"Oh, you know m-me; before any woman, m-my flow of spirits dries up; I s-sit quiet, or else I m-murmur, 'Yes, ma'am' and 'No, ma'am,' with all the exhilaration of an automatic d-doll. B-but she seemed to be as b-bad off as I was, so I felt better, and we really h-heard each other's voices once or

THE CHAMELEON

t-twice before I left. I l-liked her. I don't believe you've g-got many of her sort d-down at your emporium of l-learning, old man."

Amy's comment on that visit had been singularly like Shedsy's own. "I didn't think he was unsociable, dear," she said. "He was shy, but then so am I with everybody but—" She stopped.

"With everybody but who?" asked Bradford, in happy jealousy.

"You know who." Yes, he knew; in those golden days his betrothed wore her heart upon her sleeve for him.

Amid the general approval, there was one man who in his heart mourned over the engagement, and cursed himself for doing so. Only a coward, he told himself, cried over spilt milk; and only worse than a coward refused to take an honest beating like a man. Yet he knew himself a shade more brusque, a shade more sardonic than before. The women of his parish were more in love with Clarges than ever. All he could do was to confine expression of his thoughts and feelings to the four walls of his room. These latter might have heard him cry out sometimes, and seen him torture himself as vainly and

MARRIAGE

unsparingly as a monk of La Chartreuse; then robe himself and go down to lead his flock to God. But they could hear and see quite safely; had they told, who would have believed? What? the rector of St. Hilda's, who sat high and lay soft, to humble himself in the night-watches? What? Clarges of '89, who had played unmoved through the bitterest crises of four hard-fought seasons, and heard over and over the long yell that ended in his name; Clarges of '89, who had been twice suspended, and still held the university record in the broad jump—Clarges of '89 to be a mediæval fool? What? Father Clarges, who met with a calm forehead the storm of adulation that swept up to him from the wives, sisters, daughters, of his church, and beat it back—Father Clarges disturb his rest for the welfare of a snippet of a girl? What? *That* Clarges, the most open champion of the principle that an Episcopalian congregation is a business corporation, not a religious body; the head and front of the pernicious doctrine which was commercializing the church—*that* Clarges bow contritely and repent with blood and tears before his God? Go to; are we all fools? Doubt that the stars

THE CHAMELEON

are fire, but never doubt we know our respective Clarges.

Still, whether the walls heard and saw correctly or not, whether their gossip should or should not have been believed, it is true that the summer was a hard one for Clarges, and he grew a little thinner in the heat. Had it not been for a strike among the street-car men during July, he would probably have given up his pastorate and gone to Europe for a while. But he was drawn into the settlement of that strike, and, after much backing and filling among the powers of both sides, succeeded in the appointment of a board of arbitration to settle it. His efforts elicited some reluctant admiration, and a great deal of spirited condemnation from all quarters. Murdoch, in common with all other successful men, had almost a religious horror of arbitration, which he characterized as "d——d meddling." Still, if arbitration were to succeed, he admitted that Clarges was cut out for its operator. And he gave his unqualified respect to a man who, unarmed, stood off a mob of three or four hundred workmen and toughs, who were attempting to assault a car. That kind of personality Murdoch

MARRIAGE

could both understand and approve of. When the strike was over August had nearly come, and the wedding was close at hand. Clarges had been asked to officiate, and to retreat was apparently out of the question. Therefore he stayed on.

Amy had not wished Clarges to marry them. "He doesn't like you, Francis," she said. "He is unfair. I should rather have someone else." But Bradford drew her to his way of thinking. "We really ought to ask him, dear," he told her. "It would be almost an insult not to, since he is the rector of your church, and is known to be a friend of your uncle's. As for what he thinks about me, that's hardly the question, is it? It doesn't bother me, Amy. There is only one like or dislike that I care about, lady mine." What Bradford meant was, that having won Amy, he felt at least cordial toward a man whom he could not help thinking a discomfited rival. Moreover, it is possible that he may have desired to exult a little.

During his engagement, Bradford learned that after all he was not to marry an heiress, as he had supposed. The information did not annoy him in the least; in fact, he wasted very little thought on

THE CHAMELEON

it. He was not marrying Amy for her money; he was neither a fortune-hunter nor a lover of ostentation. Perhaps, if Amy had had no money at all, he might have tried not to fall in love with her; and perhaps, again, he might not have succeeded in his attempt. It was Murdoch who suggested that Bradford should be told of the pending gift to Carfax College. For one reason, Murdoch was so honest a man that he disliked even the semblance of deceit toward Bradford, in money matters or in any other respect; and for another, he was in a way so vain a man that he eagerly desired all who could safely do so to know his secret. If he might not yet inform the world of his success, he might still gather a few witnesses who could testify in the future. Amy was perfectly willing that Bradford should be told. It all seemed to Amy a detail. She mentioned it to Bradford in the pause of a conversation on matters which half the world knows already and the other half will never understand.

“Uncle Jack means to give a great deal of money to Carfax College, Francis—did you know that?”

“So I have heard rumored. He’s made up his mind, has he?”

MARRIAGE

“Yes. He is going to give ten million dollars.”

Bradford's eyes widened. “Impossible! Ten million!” he repeated, staggered.

She nodded. “Yes. Ten million. But he is going to wait a little before he gives it.”

Bradford smiled, thinking he understood. “Going to wait till he makes it, you mean?”

“Oh, no. He has it; he could give it right away. He had intended to give it this summer, but he thought it was better to wait a year.”

“Why should he wait—if he really wants to give it? The amount seems impossible to me, though.”

Amy was a little surprised. “Why, don't you see,” she said, “if he gave the money now, Dr. Craven would have to resign, and uncle thought it would be a pity to force him out before he was ready to go.”

“I call it rather cheap of the old Doctor to hang on, when he knows what will happen to the college as soon as he leaves.”

“Oh, he doesn't know, Francis. That is why Uncle Jack hasn't told anyone—so that Dr. Craven will not find out. Nobody knows but the lawyers and you and I.”

THE CHAMELEON

“How long did you say Murdoch had been thinking of this?”

“Uncle Jack? A long time. Six months, anyway. It was before I knew——”

“Knew what, sweetheart Amy?”

“Knew why I was so happy, dear.”

“Amy!”

“That is—I think I knew, but I was afraid.”

“But, little girl!” The stupendous fact which Bradford had just learned was working in his brain. “Do you actually mean to tell me that your uncle can put his hands on ten million dollars and turn it over to Carfax—to anybody—and have enough left to run his business?”

She nodded.

“It’s unbelievable! But the other is more unbelievable still—that ten million should wait till that old man gets ready to resign!”

“Why shouldn’t it wait, dear? If Dr. Craven were turned out, think how cruel it would be! He is an old man, and he has been with the college all his life. Oh, it would be very nasty of Uncle Jack—wouldn’t it?”

“Amy,” demanded Bradford, acutely, “who

MARRIAGE

thought of holding up this gift—of waiting? Was it your uncle or was it you? ”

“ I spoke of it, I think. But, of course, Uncle Jack was glad to wait, as soon as he thought of it.” Amy believed this entirely.

“ Little girl,” said Bradford, kissing her, with a touch of his former awe, “ do you think you can lift me to your skies, or shall I only drag you down?” She looked into his eyes mutely; then she smiled. Bradford kissed her again for that smile. The pathos and the obvious comedy of the whole situation touched Bradford’s instinct for the dramatic very keenly. What a situation, he thought!—what possibilities for a story! He chuckled at a vision of Murdoch and Craven together at a trustees’ meeting: the pickle-maker estimating Craven’s age, speculating like a life-insurance agent, and trying not to hint at the propriety of resignation in the aged; Dr. Craven stately, absent-minded, quite unconscious of the sword suspended over him. The next time Bradford saw Dr. Craven, he looked at him with renewed interest, and even with tenderness. Murdoch’s chances were good, apparently. The President was not wear-

THE CHAMELEON

ing his years lightly like a flower. He stooped; the kindly eyes behind the glasses were dim; he hesitated a trifle in his speech. The gift may soon fall in, thought Bradford, with a little rush of pity. There was another way than resignation; Craven, after thirty-eight years of service, might die in harness after all, and Bradford hoped the kindly fates would permit it. Yet, when he talked to the pickle-maker, Bradford saw very clearly Murdoch's position. Suppose Dr. Craven should outlast the year—or two—or five, or even ten? His powers of intellect seemed unabated by his years; and even his appearance had been much as it was for a decade.

Meanwhile, was Murdoch's glory to be shadowed, and his laurel to wither before he could pluck it? Men who had given away ten million dollars were rare, yet they existed, and not so innumerously. But no man had ever given away ten million dollars which he had amassed before his fortieth birthday. True, this desire to splurge was cheap enough, and any really great man, Bradford mused, would have stood far above it. True, newspaper notoriety and the reputation of a dazzlingly successful youth were

MARRIAGE

small matters. But the pickle-maker wanted them savagely, and nevertheless forebore to seize them when they lay in reach of his hand, because, if he took them, an old man might suffer a little in his pride. It was all very funny, and a little pathetic, too—and it would make a splendid story, Bradford thought.

June lapsed into July. Commencement time had come and gone, and Kate stood up among the younger men, who were receiving their careless bachelor degrees, to take his doctorate of philosophy, which the President conferred upon him with fine old-fashioned dignity and pride.

“Ad te, Catonem Henricum Strong,” he said, and his voice lingered on the little Latin pronoun as if he loved it. Few such degrees had he the opportunity to give; never one to a man he cared so much for. “Ad te, Catonem Henricum Strong,” and as he pronounced the strange foreign syllables the boys cheered Kate wildly. He was very popular, was Kate.

“Kit! Kit! Kitty!”

“Here, pussy! Me-ow-w-w!”

“Buck the tackle, old man!”

THE CHAMELEON

“Don’t trip on the gown, Kate! Hold her up, boy!”

But Kate never smiled, looking straight before him into the tall Doctor’s eyes, which had once been a little above the level of his own. He received the appointment as instructor of Greek, in Dr. Craven’s own department; he was to continue as teacher where he had been student, and they cheered that, too.

Then July passed, and August came, and Bradford and Amy were married at St. Hilda’s, with a flame of candles and a glory of music round about. Murdoch insisted on the most gorgeous of weddings. “People out of town?” said he. “By the Lord Harry, we’ll give ’em something to come back for.” Amy came up the long aisle on her uncle’s arm, to where Bradford stood with Kate and Clarges. Bradford took two quick steps down to meet her; even at that moment she was calm enough to look her happiness into his eyes one instant. They were facing the altar.

Who giveth this woman to be married to this man? I, her uncle, and with good will.

Do you, Francis, take Amy to your wedded wife? While all the world looks on, I do.

MARRIAGE

Do you, Amy, take Francis to your wedded husband? I do.

Then you are pronounced man and wife. What God hath joined together, who shall put asunder?

Then Clarges prayed. His dark face was unmoved; he finished the ceremony methodically.

"The rector does everything on business principles," whispered a man among the guests, to his wife. "Bet you he is thinking now how much his fee will be. I would as soon be married by machinery."

"Isn't he handsome?"

"Who—the groom? Matter of taste, my dear. *I* was, to you."

"I mean Father Clarges, of course! Bow your head, Harry, and stop whispering! Don't you see he's praying?"

"What a looker she is—isn't she?"

"I never did like little women."

"She's not a hair shorter than you are, my dear."

"Indeed, she's a good inch! It's only her gown makes her seem so tall. I looked perfectly enormous in my train."

THE CHAMELEON

"You were just the right height, I remember. Now they're coming down!"

"Don't stare at her so. It embarrasses a bride."

"Mighty few of 'em need worry. But this one sees not me; she sees only her husband—as a wife should."

"What nonsense—as if you wanted to cage us!"

Thus Mr. and Mrs. Bradford came down the aisle together.

"Mercy, Harry, look at the carriages!"

"There's a reception at the house, of course?"

"Only to particular friends."

"I'll bet the pickle-man wishes his place was bigger now. Really, I'm surprised he don't hire a hall."

The particular friends gathered at the reception. Miss Mangler was there, and congratulated Amy warmly. "Such a charming man, my dear! I know scarcely a woman who would not tell you the same thing, and with reason. But do be careful! Those are the dangerous sort to wives, you know. Keep a tight rein, my dear!" Over the punch she confided certain views to a young man whom she

MARRIAGE

captured easily, and held with her glittering eye, though like the other wedding-guest he beat his breast. "Champagne punch, of course! One wonders that they do not serve it in gold goblets. This sort of display is the curse of America—don't you think so, Mr. Barnes?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You know these two?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Which—the bride or the groom?"

"Yes, ma'am." With a wild plunge past her, a hot heart, and some exculpatory murmur on his lips, Shedsy disgracefully escaped.

"Come along, oh c-come along, K-Kitty dear! Females surround me; my c-collar melts; agony grips my h-heart. Come with me and we'll get a g-glass of beer!"

"I can't, Shedsy. The best man can't go off like that."

"The worst man can—and does. G-good-by. K-kiss the bride for me."

"Kiss her yourself."

"God forbid!" said Shedsy. "And yet I don't know b-but I'd like to." Alas, Amy did not hear

THE CHAMELEON

that compliment, the sincerest she received throughout the gratulatory day.

Miss Craven came in late, and kissed Amy almost in tears. "Not to see you married, my darling! It was hard. The Doctor had one of his bad turns again, and I couldn't leave him. Isabelle is with him now. She sends you both her dear love. I had to come for just a moment. Not to see you married after all!"

"Is Dr. Craven very ill, Marion?"

"N-no; I don't think so. He has had one of these attacks before. We were a little afraid it was his heart. He is getting old—poor daddy!" Miss Craven's eyes were full of tears now. "And I had to miss your marriage, Amy!"

"Never mind, Marion dear. I know you wanted to be there."

"Isn't that the first time you've called me Marion? I'm a fool, Amy; an old fool. It is all out of fashion to cry at weddings, I know. Well, you may be sure I sha'n't cry at my own."

And last of all, the rector of St. Hilda's attended the reception.

"I congratulate you heartily, Bradford."

MARRIAGE

“ I think I deserve congratulation, Father Clarges. I know you have done service to the whole community this summer, but I fancy you haven’t done as much for anybody as for me to-day.”

“ Is—Mrs. Bradford, where is she? ”

“ Just over there you will find my wife, I believe,” laughed Bradford. Clarges looked, and took a step or two in that direction; but he never reached Amy. She had asked him not to speak to her again. He had, indeed, forfeited the right to speak to her. He watched her a moment. The marriage was over, now; done by his own hand; they had taken each other for better or worse. He looked round the crowded and glaring rooms, so familiar to him, and yet so unfamiliar in their holiday dress, and reflected that of the company he was probably the only one to be fearing the outcome of this ceremony.

“ It is done,” he thought. “ What remains for me? To hope for them both; to pray for Amy; and to take myself out of her sight.”

Bradford drove away, alone in the carriage with his wife. “ Don’t you want to know where we are going, wife of mine? ”

THE CHAMELEON

“ I am going with you.”

There was an interval. Then Bradford, “ A veil is such a nuisance! ”

“ Are we going far, Francis? ”

“ Aha! You are curious, after all? Yes, sweetheart, very far—to the Hills of Joy, and beyond! ”

“ I don’t call *that* far.”

“ Ah, my little, little, little wife! ”

When they reached the station, Kate met them with tickets, which he thrust into Bradford’s hand. “ Your baggage is all right. Yes, I attended to the fee. Good-by, Frankie. God bless you both. Au revoir. Oh, you lucky, lucky dog! Oh, you lucky dog! ” Kate stared after them. Then he threw back his head. “ God willing, I’ll be going off that way myself—soon.”

She said to him on the train, “ I know where we are going, Francis.”

“ No! ” Bradford was profoundly surprised.

“ And Uncle Jack? ”

“ Uncle Jack has turned the place over to us for a while. He will not come up till we send for him.”

“ I am glad my wedding was on such a perfect day.”

MARRIAGE

“ Mine must have been perfect, since it was to you, Amy dear.”

They drove to the bungalow through a narrow way among the sweet-scented trees. Blue flower-eyes, sleepy in the warm late afternoon, nodded up at them drowsily. Cones mysteriously dropped. A rabbit ran across the road in front of them.

“ See, Amy ! ”

“ They say that is bad luck, Francis.”

“ We shall change the meaning of the omen, dear.”

The long, low, slate-colored bungalow, their destination, dreamed in the August haze.

“ We are here, Amy—where we were engaged.”

She looked up at him, mutely ; he kissed her with his old faint, sweet touch of awe.

Chapter Sixteen

—AND AFTER

*“ There was a girl who owned a doll
All daubed with liquid glue,
But she was not so stuck on that
As I am stuck on you, Mrs. Bradford.”*

“ That’s a silly verse, Francis.”

“ That, my dear, is why I sing it.”

Mr. and Mrs. Bradford sat upon the lawn, among the daisies and tufted dandelions. They had been married nearly one day. There is no disguising the fact that he held his wife’s hand. She wore a white summer dress, cut deeply enough to show the firm outline of her young throat and the whiteness just below. Bradford lay upon his back, thinking of nothing but his own happiness. A shadow fell across his eyes, and he looked up to behold the smallest Lowton, very scantily clad, who was surveying them doubtfully.

— A N D A F T E R

“Go away, young man, go away. If you stay where you are, I shall put you in a bag and throw you in the river.”

“Let him alone, Francis.”

“My dear Mrs. Bradford, he is the scion of a worthy house, I admit. But even a Lowton must know his place. There is a time coming in his life when he will regret having stared at us.”

“Don’t you like children?”

“I adore them; but not—just—now.”

“He will tell on us?”

“Precisely. He is the advance-agent of conventionality, and therefore I shall dismiss him, if I can. Youth, begone! Scatter! Abi, evasi, erupi—or words to that effect.”

No fear, only disgust, was evident in the eyes of the youngest Lowton, as he turned away. There was nothing in this scene for a man of parts to contemplate except contemptuously.

“Francis, Lowton worships you—did you know that?”

“The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone!”

“Hush! You know I don’t like to have you

THE CHAMELEON

make fun of yourself. He is quite right to care about you. Think what would have happened to that child but for you."

"Among other things, I should not have been enjoying the present pleasure of your society, Amy."

"Why not?"

"Confess that you never cared about me until you saw me jump into the river."

She laughed. "As if that mattered! You couldn't help jumping in. It only made me a little, little surer that you were everything I thought you."

"Don't you praise me, my wife; it isn't good for me."

"Why not, if I think it? You know I think it. Francis, do you remember the day you sang, at the Cravens' tea?"

"That was the day I fell in love with the woman who subsequently married me."

"You couldn't have—so soon!"

"If it was not that day, little girl, I swear I don't know when it was."

"I wonder when I began to care for you?"

—AND AFTER

“I tell you it was the day I jumped into the river.”

“Perhaps,” she continued, “it came to me, too, that day at the Cravens’. I wonder? I know that I was glad that someone could really show what he thought and felt, as you were doing, and sorry that I was so dumb. You know I was always a dumb thing. I could never even let Uncle Jack see that I cared for him—though I did, tremendously. And the girls fancied I wanted not to be with them. It wasn’t true, but how could I tell them so? That day, when I heard you singing, so unconscious of everything except what the song meant to you, I remember I held my breath; I couldn’t think of anything, only wonder why it seemed so sweet. And then do you remember you came and asked me how I liked it? And I said—oh, I don’t know what, but I could see that you were hurt, and I hated myself. I wanted to cry out, and say—‘I loved it, I loved it!’ but I couldn’t very well do that, could I? I almost wish I had!” She laughed again, merrily. Then she went on, more thoughtfully, “I wonder if I really did care for you from that very time? If I did I didn’t know it; not for a long time. I

THE CHAMELEON

began to suspect you cared for me, but I couldn't see why; I was such a dumb little thing, and you were so clever and strong. Sometimes I wanted to scream at you—'Oh, don't believe that I'm just stupid! Don't fancy I'm heartless because I can't speak! I do care about things; I want to speak, but something—something—' ” She broke off, and looked away into the deep blue beyond the ridge so thick with yellow-pines. “ Dear, how did you ever guess? How did you know that poor Amy had a heart like other girls? It must have been because you are so strong and sure yourself, that you could understand and sympathize with me. You love me, don't you, Francis? And I—I love you, my husband, my king, my king! ”

“ Please don't, Amy! ”

“ Why do you cry when I tell you I love you? Do you mind it? I will try not, but really, I can't help it, dear. I do love you, so I have to tell you. Why, I love to love you! I never loved before. Do you see the sun shining, and the river running away, and the wind down there in the grass? I saw them all my life, and never knew, never knew—that they all had a soul, and were part of my soul, too. I

— A N D A F T E R

never guessed what life was. I watched it, but it went by me, and how was I to know what it meant? And then you saw me watching and knew—how did you know? I was only a girl in a window, and I couldn't speak, couldn't even wave my hand to you as you rode by; but you loved me, and beckoned to me—and I came. Of course I love you, dear."

What did Bradford see as she spoke? Gone from his vision was his poor, shivering self; clothed with the purple and samite of his wife's love, he beheld himself royal like a prince, and was deceived, of course. We should have known better. Yet let us, in our strong self-knowledge, spare a little pity for Bradford.

"Amy dear," he asked, presently, "do you know that I have never told you my mother's first name?"

"What was it?"

"Aimee. Aimee Curtis Bradford."

"The same as mine!"

"Yes; the same as yours."

"Amy Bradford," she pronounced aloud. "Amy Bradford she was, and now here is Amy Bradford come again. Amy Bradford! I have been Amy

THE CHAMELEON

Power so long, I hardly feel acquainted with Amy Bradford!"

"So long?" he laughed.

"I shall be twenty-one my next birthday."

"Which comes in July, and we are now in August. Why in a hurry to grow up, my wife?"

"I am grown up, dear. Amy Power was a little girl, if you wish. But Amy Bradford is grown up—quite grown up."

"You want some inches of six feet still, I fear."

"Was she tall?"

"Who, dear?"

"Your mother."

"About your height, my wife."

"She loved you very much, I know?"

"I think she did—yes."

"And she has been dead six years. Do you think she knows that you are happy, Francis? You *are* happy, aren't you?"

"On such a fine day—yes, my wife, I am. If the sun were a trifle less warm, I may say I should be completely happy."

"My mother has been dead—twenty-one years next July."

— A N D A F T E R

“ She died when you were born, didn’t she? ”

“ Very soon after. I wonder what she was like! ”

“ Small—and still—and beautiful—and good, Amy.”

“ You mean that I am those? Dear, I love to hear you call me beautiful. It makes me think I am! ”

“ Do you believe so truly in my word? ”

“ Yes, Francis.”

“ Thank you, my wife.”

“ And Francis? ”

“ Well? ”

“ I am not beautiful, I am afraid; nor good. But I think I know what truth is. I think, in just that one thing, I am worthy of you, my husband. Francis, do you think I ought to tell you—everything? ”

“ That, my dear, I will leave to your judgment.”

“ There was a man once,” she said, after a pause, “ who—told me he loved me.”

“ How could he help it? ”

“ I hated him! ”

“ I know him, my dear; or one of him.”

“ There was only one.”

THE CHAMELEON

“ And you hated him? Did he—did he say anything—by chance—about me, Amy? ”

She nodded.

“ What? ”

“ I have forgotten. No; I have not forgotten. But he will not speak to me again.”

“ Are you so unforgiving, little wife? ” Bradford spoke with a lazy content. He bore no ill-will to Clarges. In fact, he was a little pleased that the rector, too, should have transgressed the rules of the game; it marked a score off his own book. But Amy did not answer the smile in his voice. Her lips were firm as she repeated,

“ He will not speak to me again, Francis.”

Lowton, that ancient servitor, here appeared, axe in hand.

“ Mirabel, she says it's dinner-time, an' she's gen'ally right. I dunno 's I ever saw you lookin' better, Miss Amy.”

“ Mrs. Bradford, Lowton. Don't forget that.”

“ Mis' Bradford, I should say. I was remarkin' to Mirabel that marriage agrees with some folks, I guess, but it never agreed with me much.”

— A N D A F T E R

“What have you been cutting?”

“Cuttin’?” Lowton’s voice was dramatic in the intensity of its scorn. “I hain’t been cuttin’ nothin’. I been hammerin’ an ol’ dead log to pieces for firewood, same ez a man lookin’ fer grub-worms!”

“Come, Amy. A voice crieth—dinner!”

There is an infinitely complex joy to see one’s wife at such a simple matter as the washing of her face and hands, and the adjustment of the ripples of her hair.

Luncheon was made momentous by the present of a cake—a mighty cake, which bore the legend, “Welcome, F. and A.,” done in red peppermints. The younger Lowton carried this in, his mother following to explain. “And we hope it ain’t a libaty, which it is; but we’re so fond of Miss Amy; an’ what you did for us, sir, can’t be told. So I thought how a cake——”

“It was a fine thought,” answered Bradford, heartily, “and this is a fine cake. Will you have a slice, A.?”

“Yes, F., if you please.”

They went for a long walk after luncheon. Amy

THE CHAMELEON

attired herself in a blue waist and a short blue skirt. Blue became Bradford's favorite color—next to gray.

“Welcome, huntress of the ancient woods. Shall I take a rifle?”

“Why?”

“Why, indeed? We will let Cupid walk between us, Amy, and use his bow and arrows if any game turns up.” She laughed gayly for answer. The mildest humor found her favor, if it was Bradford's. Let us rise up and call blessed the wife who laughs at her husband's wit. There is more contentment in such a household than when stalled oxen are the daily food.

They took the “high trail,” across the river, and along, by bushes of russet and bushes of green, through colonnades of fir and pine. Away below the river crept and sparkled, now leaving them, now as suddenly returning. Bradford declared that it was spying on them—a detective river, set to watch their doings by some envious and inimical god.

“May not my wife and I walk where we please?” he questioned, disdainfully.

— A N D A F T E R

By and by they reached a small ravine, descended it, and found a creek wending along. He made a cup of his hands, and she drank.

“How funny it tastes!” she cried. He put some to his lips. “Im-h’m! Amy—do you see that place where it shallows to the shore—there where the rock is? And from there do you see that scar, like a road almost, up the side of the ravine? Deer made that scar. This is a deer-lick. Here they come, early in the morning, and take their Congress water. There was one like this up north, where I used to camp out. If I had a rifle now, and there was a deer there, and it was in season, and I could hit him—bang! Venison for dinner? Will you have yours broiled or fried, my wife?”

“Did you shoot them up north?”

“I shot at them. My shooting was always better when I had left the rifle in camp—as now. Did I ever tell you about my guide’s Winchester? He had a wonderful Winchester, only he hadn’t it with him. ‘That thar gun,’ he told us, ‘she’d shoot five hundred yards on a dead level, and then, boys, she’d raise a leetle.’”

THE CHAMELEON

"Was that the time you had the fight at the dance?"

"That was the time, oh, Amy."

She was sitting on the rock above the spot to which the deer were used to come. The sunlight, flinging recklessly down the hill among the trees, checkered the water and barred the skirt of her gown. No word whispered to Bradford—"Be careful!" No thought of the possibilities of the moment, no thought of sorrow, came into his mind; he only smiled to see the sweetness of this young girl, his wife.

"Francis?"

"Yes?"

"I remember that story about the dance so well! I have often thought of it since. You were so near death—and then I might never have known you, never have known you." Her voice dropped softly. "I want to ask you something funny."

"The half of my kingdom?"

"No, dear. But you told me once about that scar on your shoulder, where you were shot." Her voice sank a little lower still. "To-night, Francis—when we are alone—will you show it to me, please?"

— A N D A F T E R

The question struck home so suddenly, he could scarcely gather his wits to meet it. His wife waited, her hand busy idly with the moss upon the stone, and a lovely shyness in her gray eyes; and he thought rapidly and hard. There was no scar upon his shoulder. Should he tell her that the mark had disappeared? But what had he told her less than a year before? Bradford understood very clearly with what ease one may draw about him a network of lies, and with what difficulty he escapes from it. Had he but known, he might safely have explained the matter so, for she would never have dreamed of doubting his word. But again he judged her by himself. He thought of pretending that she must have been mistaken, and that he had never told her the scar was there. But he dared not do it. So, at length, driven to honesty, he said, his voice a little strained, as even he could tell,

“Why, my dearest, I would, but you see—” He broke off. This was not, after his wife’s words of the morning, the easiest task he had ever had to do. She looked at him, a little frightened.

“Francis—shouldn’t I have asked?”

THE CHAMELEON

“ Oh, Amy ! ” The realization of her delicious charm caught at his heart afresh ; and yet it is true that even in the moment he wondered whether he might not escape so. He may be forgiven ; he was a hunted man. And he knew at once, with his keen judgment in such matters, that no loop-hole opened in that remark. Poor fellow, he was used to estimating the chances of a lie. “ It is only, dear, that—well, I stretched that matter a little, I’m afraid, when I told you.” It was very hard to say. And the bullet had really gone very close. What is the distance from the truth to a lie ? “ There isn’t really any scar. The bullet didn’t quite hit me ; or it just grazed me, rather.”

She stared at him, not quite understanding. “ Then—there is no scar ? ”

“ None, dear.”

Her brain wrought over this puzzle. He, her husband, had said—and now he unsaid. “ Then there was no fight at all ? Wasn’t any of it true ? ”

“ Oh, yes, it was all true,” he assured her, hastily. “ All true. The fellow fired, and as I dodged down the bullet went right over the corner of my shoulder

— A N D A F T E R

—see, just here!” But this time he caught no glance of absorption in his story. Yet he hurried on. “I heard it go smash! against the wall, and I saw that my coat was torn. It felt as if someone had suddenly drawn a pin across my shoulder—that’s all.” Even now, though he longed to stick exactly to the truth, he did not quite. If you will fancy yourself in Bradford’s place, you may appreciate the quickness of his shifts, the sureness of his adapted details; and you may understand then the dramatic vividness of imagination which Bradford had to combat. How he hung on Amy’s next word!

“This rock is growing cold,” she said. “Let’s walk on, dear.” He helped her down, and they walked on—at first in silence, but soon that became unbearable, and he talked and talked—the fiercest effort, so far, of a fiercely clever life. She answered him; but—did he imagine it? He felt as if she had slipped back somehow into the old Amy—Amy Power—the Amy of his first love, not the Amy he had married. Was this his imagination only? During all the afternoon the question tormented him. What was she thinking of him? She had

THE CHAMELEON

said that she believed herself beautiful because he told her so. It would be hard to overestimate the sensitiveness of Bradford's nerves. He went on loving his wife more and more dearly. But he did not know what she thought of him, and he dared not ask.

That night, as he lay awake, the buzzing of the river in his ears, he saw again that recurrent vision of the pilgrims on a yellow, winding road over brown, flat land. His wife slept peacefully beside him; yet again when in the vision he would have gone to her, the river sprang between, and when he would have plunged in, behold, again she waved him away and disappeared! So certain was the picture that in an agony of fear he reached out his hand and—touched his wife's cheek upon the pillow.

“What is it, dear?”

“Nothing, Amy.” So—she had not been asleep, then?

They remained a month at the Ridge. His wife was very sweet. As he grew to know her in the intimacy of marriage, he only loved her more and more. The memory of that first day and night

— A N D A F T E R

faded out of his thoughts almost entirely—almost. Yet there came now and then the haunting, harrying wonder—what did she think of him? For she had never spoken of the story of the scar.

Chapter Seventeen

DRIFTING

A few people live their lives like a novel, knowing that every chapter has a bearing on the whole, and that a continuous thread runs through all. But most of us pass our days as if we thought them a volume of short stories, which have not necessarily any connection with each other. This is fortunate, no doubt. If we incessantly realized that the events of last week, or last year, were to play a part in to-morrow's experience, we should be in a state of intolerable hesitation, timidity, and depression. If Bradford, for instance, had been forced constantly to remember, every day and all day, that a certain difference between his own character and his wife's had been made plain early in their married life, and if, in love with Amy as he certainly was, he never could have got away from the impression that she distrusted him, he would have done one of two

DRIFTING

things: hated her, or hated himself. Either result would have seemed unendurable, or at least distressing. As it was, the shadow-memory fell across his path quite frequently enough to annoy him. Instead of careering on comfortably, he was now and then conscious, with a sort of passionate irritation, of slight errors in his statements of fact, or slight variations, under the influence of some outside suggestion, from his normal procedure. The fact that he seldom talked so well to his friends as to a stranger; the fact that a sneer acted like a drink of whiskey on his nerves; and the fact, above all, that once or twice under such circumstances he had intercepted his wife's glance and looked quickly away—these matters troubled him occasionally. But for days and weeks he forgot them altogether, and lived in a happy unconsciousness of them, and walked on air.

Among these times of doubt, he wondered, now and then, what it was the rector had said of him to Amy, and once or twice he asked her; but Amy put the question by, and Bradford did not like to press it, though he momentarily, at least, despised himself for not liking to.—It is true, he never went

THE CHAMELEON

so far as to admit to himself that he was afraid of Clarges, and did not even dream that he was afraid of his wife. The fact that in his only struggle with the rector—if his suit for Amy's hand could be regarded as such a struggle—he had come off victorious, disposed of the former idea, to his mind; and the latter he would merely have said was absurd, laughed, kissed his wife with a keener pleasure, and told her about it with a delightful confidence in her answering smile. Nevertheless, he suggested that Clarges should be invited to dinner. Amy wrinkled her brows into a question, but Bradford assured her that they could do no less—the rector had undoubtedly married them, and anybody who had done him such a service as that, he wanted to reward. So Amy acquiesced quietly, without showing that the acquiescence cost her anything, and stipulated only that the dinner should include others besides Clarges. The minister relieved her by pleading a previous engagement, in which she took the liberty of disbelieving—the more when he failed to call. His failure to call, half the women of St. Hilda's would have told her, was nothing; he never called, save when the spirit moved, and it

DRIFTING

was immovable by dinners; but Amy would have kept her own opinion still. She did not like Father Clarges, she did not even wish to like him, but she thought she understood him.

A certain opposition to the rector showed itself in some of his flock at this time. The fact that he had conducted the negotiations which resulted in ending the street-car strike was cherished against him in some quarters. There was a general feeling that the men had got no more than was fair, and a widespread satisfaction in the resumption of uninterrupted traffic; but what, argued Mr. Gaines the trustee and others, was to become of capital if outsiders meddled with its concerns? The privilege of conducting a man's business to suit himself was one which should not be denied lightly to anybody. And, moreover, that a minister should have stooped to deal with practical affairs was also considered unwise. Mr. Gaines was as astounded as any knight of old might have been if a herald, suddenly ceasing to blow his trumpet and proclaim the greatness of his master the king, had rolled up his sleeves and taken a hand in the battle. Clarges's action was incongruous; it was radical. Mr.

THE CHAMELEON

Gaines, and those who agreed with him, began to hint that possibly an older and steadier man should be found for St. Hilda's; a man who knew, without dropping it, on which side his bread was buttered; a man, to use Mr. Gaines's phrase, who could be trusted. Bradford told Murdoch that half Gaines's insistence sprang from the fear that Clarges would alienate his wife's affections; and Murdoch, who had been trying hard not to sympathize with the attitude of his co-trustee, roared with laughter, and clapped his leg, and openly arrayed himself on the side of the rector. But indeed, if he were expecting gratitude for that, he must have been disappointed. Clarges made no effort to conciliate his enemies, if they could be called such, nor to thank his friends; and, so far as could be judged, was quite as unaffected by one as by the other.

It was this opposition which Bradford alleged to himself for excuse, when he dropped into Clarges's rooms one November evening. He had been working late at the office, and had telephoned to Amy saying that he should not be out till nine; but after all he found himself in his own neighborhood by eight o'clock. As he would have put it,

DRIFTING

the whim seized him to look up the rector, whom he had scarcely even seen for a month; church-going was not precisely one of Bradford's affectations. When he knocked, a voice cried "Come in!" and he entered, to find the rector, with his feet on a chair, smoking a cigar. He rose, however, and shook hands cordially enough, offered Bradford a cigar, and then slipped into his previous attitude. For a few minutes they smoked in silence.

"I saw a thing to-day," said the rector, presently, as if they had been discussing personal experiences, "that interested me a good deal. I was down in Boxtown, and I happened to notice a very small boy, perhaps four or five years old, who was crying on the edge of the sidewalk. While I was looking at him another boy, a size smaller, came up behind and gave him a push which sent him flat into the road. There happened to be a truck passing, as usual, and if the little beggar hadn't been snatched out of that in a hurry he would have been run over. I tried to find out what the trouble was, but the first child was crying too hard to talk, and the second was stubborn, and wouldn't say a word. So I asked an older boy, who was watching it, if he

THE CHAMELEON

could explain. He said, 'Sure! Don't yer see one of dem kids is a sheeny and de other's a dago?' I was still a little in doubt, and he enlightened me further. 'De sheeny's off his beat; he don't belong on dis street; he'd better be moseying out of dis if he wants ter keep his nut on.' The sheeny evidently quite agreed, for he suddenly ceased his tears, and attached himself so firmly to my leg that I had to escort him home to get rid of him."

"Was it a race war?"

"Something of the sort, I gathered."

"What takes you into Boxtown? Do you think it's part of the 'highways and the hedges'?"

"Not exactly. I had a little business there."

"Connected with your dear strikers, I suppose," laughed Bradford, tolerantly. "Well, I wanted to tell you—I haven't had a chance before—that you did a mighty fine thing in settling that strike."

"Thank you."

"You're thinking I'm some days after the fair, aren't you, considering the strike has been over so long? I admit it. But it hasn't been our fault that we haven't seen more of you, Clarges. Why don't you come to dinner when you're asked?"

DRIFTING

“I was sorry to be unable.”

Bradford laughed again. “Well, you may have been. I don’t want to boast about my wife, but I haven’t forgot the obligation you put me under when you married us.”

Clarges smoked gravely.

“Is there anything,” went on Bradford, “that wakes a man up to the possibilities of life like getting married? I remember what I used to think about it, when I was a bachelor like you, you old celibate, and I stand dumb before my own foolishness. There were times when I used to wonder whether any kindness was in the Power that ruled the world or not. It used to seem probable that there was none; we were pitchforked into existence by some law of ultimate progress, which would probably end in something great, but which was mighty hard on us intermediates. I had aspirations and dreams, and no earthly chance to satisfy them, as I very well knew; and it seemed to me a poor sort of providence which would tie a donkey up in sight of a barrel of oats, leave him starving there a while, and then come and knock him on the head. I know better now. I recognize the fact

THE CHAMELEON

that I'm still a donkey ; even marriage can't alter me in that ; but I know what I'm put in the world for, at any rate, which is more than any unmarried man can say. You think I'm a raving lunatic, but really the shoe's on the other foot ; it's you who are out of harmony with the scheme of things, not I. Do you want to know the recipe for certain happiness ? Go find a woman like my wife, and marry her."

Clarges nodded in silence. He was convinced, now, that Amy had never told her husband of their words at Murdoch's dinner. He hesitated, not knowing whether to be glad or sorry of the fact. Sometimes he was sure that Bradford suspected his own disability ; sometimes he thought the young man was supremely unconscious of it. Just now he could not make up his mind whether Bradford's words expressed only native enthusiasm, or whether they concealed a wish to find out what other people thought. Therefore he waited for the next move.

" Do you know what day this is ? "

" Eighteenth of November ? "

" Exactly. Eighteenth of last November, my

DRIFTING

dear sir, I really began to make your acquaintance."

"So?"

"Don't you recollect—Shedsy and I came to church, and you corralled us and brought us up here. You should have heard Shedsy rave about your rooms afterward! He wanted to turn Episcopalian minister. Well, I've been mighty glad to know you this year. I hope we're not going to drift apart now."

"What makes you think we shall?"

"I don't. Shedsy's theory is, though, that a married man is lost to his friends."

"We'll hope he's wrong."

"Yes. Because a man has come into his fortune is no reason why he should despise the poor beggars who are still waiting for their luck. Clarges, why don't you take my word for the joy of it, and get married?"

The rector's football training had given him agility, but not deftness, apparently. Reaching for more tobacco, he upset a small vase, which rolled off the edge of his mantelpiece and was smashed to bits.

THE CHAMELEON

“That was one of my favorites, too,” he said, sadly, as he picked up the pieces. “I bought it for a wedding present, and was too much enamoured of it to send it on.”

Bradford was properly grieved. He did not press his question, and their talk shifted to Shedsy and other topics. It is plain that neither Bradford nor the rector were intended for the diplomatic service; for, when Bradford had soon after taken his leave, he went away smiling to himself. “If that was really a favorite vase,” he mused, “the dominie should find a cheaper way of turning the subject.” And Clarges said to himself,

“She hasn’t told him, or he wouldn’t be cad enough to pretend friendship; but he guesses, and wants to make sure. I wonder if trouble has come already?” His eyes were sombre.

Bradford found Amy waiting for him. She kissed him, and helped him to take off his coat, as she always did, but afterward she slipped away, leaving him to the society of Murdoch. The pickle-maker was reading a popular magazine, and grunting over it. Presently he dashed it to one side.

DRIFTING

“D——d fool stories,” he growled, “all about boys and girls, as if men and women weren’t worth writing about. Can’t get away from the idea that if a man’s in love he’s happy, and when he stops being in love he’s unhappy. You been having any row with Amy, Frank?”

“No,” answered Bradford, surprised. “Why?”

“Well, you didn’t come home to dinner, and she seemed grumpy. Don’t waste your time quarrelling; life’s too short. But it’s none of my business, I know.”

“You’re altogether mistaken,” said Bradford. Then they relapsed into silence, from which presently Bradford roused himself to follow his wife upstairs. Murdoch’s words had set him wondering, although he was sure that had anything been wrong with Amy he should have noticed it as he came in. He found her sitting doing nothing—something unusual for Amy. He went and stood behind her chair.

“You have such pretty hair, my wife!”

She said nothing, but she put up her hand, and clasped one of his, so that he was entirely reassured.

THE CHAMELEON

"I wonder if we are *never* going to quarrel, Amy!" he laughed.

"Why do you say that?"

"Your uncle was just lecturing me. He thinks I've done something to you—hurt your feelings."

She only held his hand the tighter.

"Dearest!" He bent over to kiss her; and, as he did so, a letter fell from his breast-pocket into her lap. She picked it up. It was bent and frayed, and showed signs of having been carried long; but it was not that which caused her quick glance up at him. She had involuntarily read the superscription. The address was, "To my Mother in Heaven."

"Just a whim of mine, once," he said, speaking lightly.

Their eyes met. "May I read it, dear?" she asked, softly.

There was an odd light in Bradford's eyes as he dropped his face to her hair, and kissed it. "I—I would rather not, Amy."

"Forgive me for asking. But—do you miss her so?"

"Never—never since I have had you, my love!"

DRIFTING

She yielded him the letter, but when he had taken it she still seemed to cling to his hand. "I am glad to fill her place a little, dear. But I have wondered if you missed her. It is so long since my mother died! I think sometimes that I can remember her, though. I have been wishing—lately—that she could come back to me."

A pang went to Bradford's heart. "Are you tired of me already, Amy?" he asked, trying to smile.

Suddenly she clutched his hand to her, and laid her lips against it. "My husband, my husband! Don't you see what I mean? I—have something to tell you."

He knelt at his wife's feet, and put his arms about her; and she told him—not with words, but with her eyes, and the fluttering touch of her hands. They sat long in silence. Bradford broke it.

"And I told a man—only this evening—that I knew what happiness was!"

Chapter Eighteen

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

"Uncle Jack," said Amy, at the dinner-table, "has an extraordinary way of celebrating birthdays. He has brought me a sable jacket, which I don't need, because he is thirty-nine to-day."

"We drink your health, Uncle Jack!"

"I'm getting old, that's right," admitted the pickle-maker. "I feel like a patriarch already. I don't mind getting gray, but I'd hate to get bald. Any signs of it?"

"No, the hairs of your head can't be numbered yet."

"I used to think," said Murdoch, "that a man was getting ready for the shelf at forty. I figured that I'd do a lot of things by that time. I don't know but I have done most of 'em."

"Is there anything you haven't done?"

"Well, yes." He gave a glance at Amy, and

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

then laughed. "The little girl there talked me out of one of them—confound her!" he added, affectionately.

"Oh, if one of your theories was that by forty you'd have learned how to manage her!" Bradford's laugh implied that Methuselah would have found life too short for that task. But both he and the pickle-maker knew what Murdoch meant. There was something irritating to a potential benefactor in the way Dr. Craven clung to the presidency of Carfax. There were rumors occasionally that he was unwell, during the winter; but they seemed contradicted by his acts and appearances. Certainly, he seemed no nearer resignation than he had been a year before, although time was passing, and Murdoch was nearing forty. It occurred to Bradford that Murdoch would possibly not find unwelcome any accident which should disclose his intention to establish the Murdoch Fund.

The idea, lingering in his mind, may have made him less guarded than usual in his speech that night. He had a caller—a caller who wished to see him personally, the maid said; and when she added the statement that the caller's name was Barnes, Brad-

THE CHAMELEON

ford laughed. He went out and grasped Shedsy's hand, and led him to the den.

"My wife will not disturb us here, old man," he said. "You needn't be afraid. I have her well trained."

Shedsy grinned. "No offence, I hope. Haven't seen you in a d-deuce of a while. How's everything?"

"If you mean my wife—she's well, thank you. How's all with you?"

"Bully. Slim's f-fatter than ever. I'm worried about Kate, though."

"What's the matter with Kate? He's a loafer. He never comes to see his friends—any more than you do, old Shedsy Barnes."

Shedsy looked worried. "I wish I knew what was the m-matter with him. He moons and m-mopes, which can't be good for anybody."

"Sick?"

"Kate?" The idea was too absurd for discussion.

"Maybe he's in love?"

"N-no, he isn't," answered Shedsy, confidently.

"How do you know?"

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

"Because he n-never goes to see but one girl, and he t-talks about her," was Shedsy's ready answer. "I was b-bothered a little, thinking it might be th-that, so I asked him something about her, and he never h-hummed nor h-hawed—which is a s-sure s-sign."

Bradford dissolved in laughter. "Shedsy, your ideas are aboriginal. You're out of date. Keep up with the procession. I'll bet my head against a penny he's in love.. Who's the girl he goes to see? "

"Miss Craven."

"Oh—Marion? Then I take it all back."

"Think she's a b-back-number? "

"Don't talk that way about a nice girl, Shedsy. I think she's out of the market, that's all. She represents a past generation, like the college."

"You're always knocking the c-college," complained Shedsy. "I don't see any harm in it. Anyway, it'll be many a long day before we get anything else here."

"I'll bet you—what you please—it won't."

"What do you know about it? "

"Want to bet? "

THE CHAMELEON

“Murdoch g-going to put his hand in his pocket after all?”

“What makes you guess that?”

“Oh, I don’t know. They s-said so, last year; and I thought you ought to know, if anybody d-did.”

“Want to bet?”

“You’re like a man with his hands shut, wanting me to bet whether he’s got a d-dollar in them or not. I won’t go against a man’s own game. But I’ll bet you you’re bluffing, just the same.”

“Maybe. But Kate is lucky to have got his job under the old régime. They may not be so easy to pick up after a while. You needn’t tell him I said so.”

“Oh, I reckon Katherine the Shrew could g-get a job in any sort of w-weather, Frank.”

“He’s a good man. But this thing may be bigger than you think.”

“How big?”

“What should you call big money for a college, Shedsy?”

“A million?”

Bradford laughed once more. “There you go

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

again with your primeval theories! A million won't pay the janitors in a modern university, let alone the professors. Make it a million a year, why don't you?"

"Who's going to give a million a year?"

"Nobody—till he gets ready. I am, perhaps. I asked you if you wanted to bet? The proposition's still open. You don't get any of my information for nothing. This is a business world, Shedsy."

"Go on!" answered Shedsy, simply. "Let's talk about the c-cushions. You put on a swell front here, F-Frank. You've g-got the rooms of that dear man of G-God, Father Clarges, whipped to a custard."

Yet when he went home, and found Kate pulling at a pipe before the fire in the rooms of the Residium, he recollected what Bradford had said, and retailed it to Kate with gusto—save the part of the conversation which related to that young doctor of philosophy.

"I'm certain, from what he said, Katherine, that the p-pickle-maker is going to give a l-lot of money to Carfax."

THE CHAMELEON

“How soon?”

“That I don’t know. Frank d-didn’t say. But soon, of course, or he wouldn’t have mentioned it to m-me.”

“How much?”

“He wasn’t d-definite. But he talked about a m-million a year.”

“A million fiddlesticks!”

“He offered to b-bet on it,” said Shedsy, argumentatively. “And by the way, he asked me not to mention it; but of course he didn’t mean you, since you were his b-best man.”

“There were those rumors last year,” said Kate, thoughtfully.

“Must be something in it,” said Shedsy, comfortably. Kate glanced at him angrily, but Shedsy was warming his hands, quite unconscious of having given cause of annoyance. “N-nasty night, out. I certainly do l-like having my own fire.”

“What time is it?”

“Only nine. After all F-Frank told me about his having his wife t-trained, do you know what happened? She came in on us; so I s-skipped out.

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

She's a queen, isn't she? Where are you going, for h-heaven's sake?"

"I've got a headache, and I want some fresh air."

"Why, boy, it's b-blowing like the mischief, and d-down to zero!"

"I don't care." Kate went out into the cold. He had been moping and unsocial, as Shedsy said, and he felt no less so to-night, since hearing Shedsy's rumor. He felt useless, incompetent. What influence upon his own fortunes, he wondered, would this news of Shedsy's, if it were true, as it probably was, in some form or other—what influence would it have upon his fortunes, and the fortunes of his friends, the Cravens? Dr. Craven was no man to have the spending of a million a year. He would resign. Kate fiercely resolved that he, too, would resign; together they would go away—where? To what? The world seemed to have got by them both some way; they represented stagnation in the midst of progress. A society on the watch for money in the mud has no time to read Greek. His thoughts were indefinably bitter as he marched along the icy sidewalks. He hardly knew why they were bitter; he hardly knew what he was railing so fiercely

THE CHAMELEON

against. At length he became aware that he was chilled, and that his errant walk had led him to the president's house; and he rang, feeling a dark scorn of himself. Marion Craven herself opened the door and let him in. "Oh, it's you?" she said. "Want to see the dad?"

"No."

"Come to see me—on this cold night? That is good of you. Sit down and talk to me nicely." She took the piano-stool, with an air of resuming some occupation, and, as he said nothing, began to touch out a melody dreamily. The notes dropped one by one, into his bitter musings. If this word was true, undoubtedly they meant to force the president out. After his years of service, they might have let him alone a little while; perhaps he would not have annoyed them long! But no—the lust for size and notoriety was in the air, and the pickle-maker, or whoever else was at the back of the plan, was only like the rest of the world. A man was kept as long as he could work, and then turned out to die. For himself, Kate thought he desired no more; but Dr. Craven was different. What obstacle was that in the way? Kick it to one side,

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

said the world, and let us get on, for God's sake. The obstacle was Dr. Craven; and Dr. Craven was——

“ You are unconventional to-night.”

“ Yes. I'm feeling a little blue.”

“ Won't you tell me about it? ”

There was something in the tone, far more than in the words, which unlocked his heart. He stood up—how big he was!—and came toward her; and Marion Craven, to whom the question had meant little, saw that in his eye which made her look down at her fingers, picking out the dreamy, desultory tune.

“ Yes. I've been feeling blue. Do you know why? Because I'm so little of a man, and yet because I—love you so much.”

“ Mr. Strong! ”

“ I know I'm presumptuous. I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon, honestly. I'm such a fool. Only, I've cared so much, and so long, that when you asked me just now, I couldn't help telling you. I'm very sorry.”

She rose and faced him. “ Do you know what you are saying? ”

THE CHAMELEON

“Oh, yes. I know well enough. I haven’t any excuse to offer. I’ve wanted to say it a long time, though of course I know how preposterous it is. A woman like you—couldn’t be expected to care for such as I. Well—I’ll say good-night. I’m sorry if I annoyed you; but I’m not sorry I told you. I couldn’t help it. I love you, and I have for years.”

He was not looking at her, and so he did not see the wonder in her eyes change slowly to a light which was very soft. They stood a little apart, the woman young at thirty-five, the boy old at twenty-seven. He turned to go.

“I don’t see,” she whispered, “why it is—preposterous.”

At that he looked up, and saw her face.

“Wait, wait!” she cried, breathlessly. “I am—I shall be thirty-six my next birthday. I have been engaged to other men. There was one I—cared about. Can you take me on those terms? Can you take an old woman—almost?”

He only stared at her without moving, while the fire crackled and purred in the stillness. “Do you mean—you love me a little?”

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT.

"Not a little." Her hands played with her chain. "Not a little. A great deal."

"That is worth waiting these years for."

"Oh," she exclaimed, suddenly, "do you think I have just begun to care? Why, why, have you let them go by? We might have known so long ago, before I was an old woman—almost! I should have stayed young, then. Now I am too old to be——"

"What? "

"Kissed," she breathed, inaudibly. But Kate heard.

They sat watching the red-gray heart of the fire, and tried to realize the change that had come into their lives.

"Just a little while ago," said Kate, "while I was on my way over here, I was thinking how harsh the world was. And now——" He left the sentence unfinished.

"Why did the world seem harsh? "

"I don't know. Because I was not man enough to ask for what I wanted, perhaps."

"Was there nothing else? "

He hesitated. "Shedsy had brought me some news I did not like."

THE CHAMELEON

“What was it?”

“Nothing.”

“I have a right to know.”

“Yes, you have; a double right. It is about Carfax College.”

“Well?”

“He says—it sounds a little wild—that Murdoch, or someone he knows of, is going to give Carfax College a million a year.”

“What!”

“Of course it’s absurd. But there’s something in it, no doubt. Shedsy had it from Frank Bradford to-night.”

She looked at him, half-frightened. “I wonder if dad knows?”

“No. I am sure he doesn’t.”

“Would you tell him?”

“It is only a rumor.”

“If it came so directly as you say, it is more than a rumor.”

“That is true.”

“Can you trust Mr. Barnes? He may have misunderstood.”

“Shedsy never misunderstands.”

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

"And he had it from Mr. Bradford to-night?"

"Yes. What object would Frank possibly have in speaking of such a thing, if it were not true?"

"I would rather tell father myself than have him find it out suddenly. Did he say when the news was to be given out?"

"Soon, he thought."

"It would be like that man to try and make a sensation out of it," she said, vindictively. "He cares for nothing but notoriety—he and his pickles! Look at those billboards."

"Where is your father?"

"I believe he has gone to bed. He isn't very well."

Before the statement had left her lips, the door opened slowly, and Dr. Craven, in dressing-gown and slippers, appeared. He looked very old. Kate's heart was stirred again with a rush of pity.

"Marion," the president said, "I remember that I have a letter I must send. Will you transcribe it for me?"

His daughter looked from the young man to the old. She saw, in her eager fancy, headlines shrieking the news of this great gift to Carfax College;

THE CHAMELEON

she saw her father surprised, shocked, upset in his feebleness. He ought to be warned of this chance, she reasoned. Her mind was made up impulsively. "Tell him," she said to Kate.

"Dr. Craven," said Kate, hesitantly, "I wish to marry your daughter."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I didn't mean that," she interrupted. "I meant—never mind. It is quite true, daddy dear. He wishes to marry me, and I wish to marry him. May I?"

Dr. Craven looked from one to the other. He held out his hand to Kate, saying,

"I think, my dear, I will get your mother to transcribe my letter." He turned.

"No, wait," said Marion. "Mr. Strong, tell him about the other."

"We heard a rumor to-night, Dr. Craven," said Kate, obediently, "that Marion—that we think you should know of. It came to us very directly that Mr. Murdoch, or someone he knows of, is about to give a great deal of money to Carfax College. The sum mentioned was a million dollars a year."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Strong. I am not

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

sure I heard you rightly. Will you say that again, please?" Kate said it again. Dr. Craven sat down. His daughter took the arm of his chair, and put her hand upon his arm.

"A rumor only, you say? I cannot believe it, Strong. Mr. Murdoch would have notified us through the proper channels. He is a trustee. These matters are not given to the public before they have been acted on officially."

"We had it from his—from Mr. Bradford, tonight."

"Is it possible!"

"Yes, sir."

"What a gift! What a college we—they will have, with that endowment!"

"They!" echoed his daughter, in irrepressible indignation.

"I am an old man, my dear," reproved her father, gently. "I am—an old man." He looked at the thin hand his daughter held—a scholar's hand, long, blue-veined, wrinkled. For eleven years he had been Professor of Greek at Carfax College, and president for twenty-seven. Yes, he was an old man. Yet he had not before realized so keenly

THE CHAMELEON

that seventy was a great age. He had always intended to resign at seventy, and so secure time to finish his Commentaries. Well—the time for the Commentaries might come sooner than he had fancied.

“They will never—” began Kate, in a low voice, as if he were afraid of blasphemy. But Dr. Craven was rude enough, for almost the first time in his life, to interrupt. “They will never ask for my resignation. No. I do not believe they would. Mr. Murdoch is too kind-hearted a man to acknowledge the inevitable. But of course—if this news proves true, as I hope and believe it may—I shall resign at once. I could not direct the fortunes of such an institution as this will be.” He lapsed into silence.

“Father?”

“Ah—what is it, my dear? I was just thinking”—his voice trailed off. Thinking? Yes; he was thinking of the thirty-eight years which he had given up to Carfax College, and which he was now, if this news were true, to leave. Was he daring to repine? Oh, shameless old man, selfish, unambitious old scholar of Greek, to receive so great

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

a gift in such a fashion! Minister, where is your religion? He looked up.

"I am—a little tired. I think I shall go upstairs, and ask your mother to read to me. Yes. What a day it will be for Carfax, will it not? Carfax will expand, as Mr. Murdoch is so fond of saying. This will please Mr. Murdoch, this gift—will it not?"

"Mr. Murdoch is giving the money, father."

"What say? Yes. True. I had forgotten. Still, I think he should have let us know more directly perhaps. Probably he intends to surprise us, however. And now—if you will excuse me—I feel a bit tired. Thank you." Leaning on his daughter's arm, he climbed the stairs.

.

Next evening the pickle-maker came jubilantly to the dinner-table. "Hello, kids!" he cried, comprehensively, to Bradford and Amy. "Had a letter to-day—guess who from?"

"Couldn't to save ourselves."

"From the old doctor—Dr. Craven. He wants to know whether a rumor he has heard is true, that

THE CHAMELEON

I'm to give something to Carfax College. Apologizes for writing, but says the directness of his information justifies him. I told him I didn't know where he'd got his facts, but since he asked me, I wouldn't deny I was thinking seriously of it; had made up my mind to it."

"You told him that, Uncle Jack?"

Murdoch nodded. "Wonder how the old boy learned about it? Either of you been saying anything? It must have been Barrett. He pretends to be so close-mouthed, but the best of us will slip up occasionally. At any rate, there's no harm done. I was thinking yesterday we'd have to make up our minds to it, pretty soon. I've mailed the formal letter to the board, tipped the wink to the papers, and I guess the reporters will be out here to-night like wolves."

"So Dr. Craven knows about it," said Amy, thoughtfully. "What did he say in his letter, Uncle Jack?"

"Nothing much. Just wanted to know if his information was accurate. I told him I didn't know how he'd got it, but that he'd got it straight."

"I wonder how he heard?" She was musing

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

aloud, not addressing anyone in particular. Neither Bradford nor Murdoch had time to answer at the moment, for the bell rang.

“The first wolf’s at the door!” cried Murdoch, gayly. He was plainly in no mood of reproach to whoever had betrayed his secret.

“A gentleman from the *Times*, to see Mr. Murdoch.”

“Tell him to wait. I’ll see him in twenty minutes.”

During that twenty minutes the bell rang again four times. Gentlemen from the *Herald*, from the *Spy*, from the *Eagle*, and from the *Globe*, were also anxious, it appeared, to see Mr. Murdoch. The city press called him up by telephone, and asked permission to send a man out. The representative of the New York *Sun* drove up in a cab with his deadly rival, the head of the Carfax Bureau of the Associated Press. The telegraph wires buzzed from Maine to California, and Carfax was the centre of the electrical storm. Had the Secretary of the Treasury embezzled all the funds in his possession, and fled to Murdoch’s house, the siege of correspondents could scarcely have been heavier.

THE CHAMELEON

Ten million dollars cannot be thrown into the educational pool without a splash.

Murdoch was in his glory. "Well, boys," he began, and the words were the keynote of his mood. Once again he sang his pæan, but this time to the proxies of a nation. He sat lounging in his chair, ostentatiously careless, smoked a cigar, and radiated content and enthusiasm, while they plied him with questions. Swimming before his eyes came the massive headlines, while he answered gayly. "Another of you!" he chuckled, when the special correspondent of the *Journal*, the *American*, and the *Examiner* appeared. "Well, have a cigar. Funny what a stir this little gift of mine seems to make, ain't it?" And the reporters accepted his cigars, and winked at each other when they had time; and in the accounts next day appeared not a word of his unreserve, or his zeal for advertisement, or his naïve enjoyment of the sensation which he was creating, but only stately phrasing which kept him before the public in the light that ought to halo a benefactor of his magnitude. That was what they did for him, not because they were grateful for his heartiness or his good cigars, but because it is

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

the policy of the newspapers of America, one and all, to keep up our illusions as a nation. The moment that we publicly admit those truths which we privately confess, two things will happen: the United States will cease to be the butt of the world's laughter, and it will begin to decay.

Of course the problem soon presented itself, and was formulated by these trained questioners—what was to become of Dr. Craven? Murdoch pished and pshawed. The money was given to the Board of Trustees without conditions. Dr. Craven was a friend of his—a personal and dear friend. Whatever was done would be done decently and in order. There was no hurry. And the scribbling reporters noted all this eagerly, nor thought it incumbent upon them to mention that other reporters, ready to scribble quite as fast, had been sent posting to Dr. Craven long ago; to the members of the Board of Trustees; to prominent men upon the faculty—everywhere the slightest chance of news appeared. The newspapers of Carfax are not unique in their methods. Like others, they leave nothing to chance; they discover all they can, by hook or crook; having done which, they guess at what re-

THE CHAMELEON

mains, and publish the whole for truth. Murdoch might have known that already men in all the offices were busy with a list of possible successors to Dr. Craven.

That was not a wild night in Carfax newspaperdom, because the facts were all easy to get, and no mystery was involved. But it was a busy night. And the headlines, next morning, left the pickle-maker but little to desire. Only one grieved him, as it was repeated with variations over and over again. "President Craven to Resign." President Craven, it is true, had refused, with stately courtesy, to consider the matter, so far as it affected the business management of the college, until he had communicated with the Board of Trustees. It was not his custom, he told them gently, to anticipate through the public press the action of the Board. This gift was very generous; it was wonderful; it might be epoch-making for education. Further, however, he could not go. So the reporters and the editors went alone. "Craven to Step Out." "New Blood for Carfax." "Fear that President Craven will Resign." In one way or another, they all suggested the next step of that progress which, in

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

Murdoch's phraseology, was to take Carfax College to the head of the procession.

Where was Bradford, meanwhile? Slipping into his coat, dodging a reporter at the door, and making his way as fast as cars would take him to the Residuum. When Murdoch had asked, in passing, "Either of you two said anything?" and when Amy had wondered how Dr. Craven had heard, Bradford had not replied, because it seemed to him impossible, absurd, to suppose that his words to Shedsy Barnes the night before could have resulted in this explosion. Twenty-four hours previously—less than twenty-four hours previously—he had hinted at a possibility; could his hint have been transformed to certainty in that space of time? The idea, he told himself over and over, was incredible. Yet he was not reassured. Murdoch's attitude toward him, if his words had really been the betrayal, would not be harsh—but Amy's? Amy! There was the point round which his speculations revolved. The click of the car-wheels resolved itself into a maddening iteration—What—will—Amy—say? What—will—Amy—say? When he had been talking to Shedsy the night be-

THE CHAMELEON

fore, he had thought only of Murdoch's position, and of the stunning news itself. His wife's little query, her intercepted glance, suddenly waked in Bradford's mind a thousand fresh possibilities. She was a—she was a little odd about some things. Yet what, after all, had he told Shedsy? The barest fragments of things—inchoate hints, at the most, quite impossible of transformation into this complete knowledge. Moreover, Shedsy was a safe man. There had been the Barton case, which he had known the secret of; yet he had never dropped a word of it; the case had gone to its successful conclusion, without a suspicion in the mind of anyone that Shedsy knew. He would not mention this, any more than he had mentioned that, thought Bradford. Wherever this information of Craven's had sprung from, it had not come from Shedsy, that was certain. And the cars clicked off their endless repetition as a sub-current to his meditations — What — will — Amy — say? — until he reached his corner and swung off. Then he raced over the icy walks, sprinted round the corner, dashed up the steps of the Residium—and, whistling a careless tune, sauntered into the Residium.

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

Shedsy was sitting there alone. He looked up as Bradford entered, and his face lightened.

“Hello, Frank!”

“Hello, Shedsy!”

“G-glad you came up. I was just g-going down to see you.”

“Anything special?” Bradford strove fiercely and successfully to keep the keen interest out of his voice.

“Well, yes. You remember what you hinted to me last night, and asked me not to mention?”

“What was that, Shedsy?”

“Well, about the money for Carfax, and so on. Hey? Well, I told Kate. He told the C-Cravens. Now, he says, it's got back to Murdoch. I'm sorry.”

“So am I, Shedsy.”

“My G-God, Frank, don't say that! T-tell me it don't make any d-difference to you—can't you t-tell me that? Seems to me I've g-got about all I can stand now, what with K-Kate—” He broke off.

“It won't make any great difference, I guess, old boy. Still, I wish you hadn't told. But then,

THE CHAMELEON

if the milk's out of the pitcher, why, it's out of the pitcher." What—will—Amy—say? The click of the car-wheels echoed in Bradford's brain.

"I never thought K-Kate would tell," ran on the boy, eagerly, his face lightening again as Bradford passed the matter off. "I supposed of c-course you would tell Kate anything you'd t-tell me, since he was your best man, and all. But I was pretty b-blue when you came in. I was just going d-down to your place to tell you about it."

"It's done now, Shedsy. We won't say anything more about it. It'll be in all the papers in the morning."

"N-no? How do you know?"

"There were twenty reporters at Murdoch's when I left."

Shedsy groaned.

"Never mind, old man. Where did you say Kate was?"

"G-gone to the Cravens. He's—" Shedsy stopped once more. "Frank, I swear. I'm almost afraid to t-tell you, after my last b-bull. But Kate said it wasn't a secret. He's engaged to Marion C-Craven."

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

“Engaged to Marion Craven!”

Shedsy nodded dumbly. At any other time Bradford would have been amazed and amused at this news, but to-night the questioning rattle of the car-wheels was too clear in his hearing. So he sat idly, hearkening and fearing. What—will—Amy—say? Presently he roused himself, and for ten minutes made a pretence of talk; then he got up. “Well, old man, so long.”

“Don’t go, F-Frank.”

“Must, I’m sorry to say.”

“You—you don’t bear m-malice, do you? I’m anything you p-please, but true as g-gospel, I never dreamed the story would g-get out!”

“Not a bit, Shedsy.” Bradford smiled, and if the smile were feeble, nevertheless Shedsy saw it. When Bradford had gone, Edgar Baker Barnes still sat by the table, drumming with his fingers. At length Slim appeared, and looked at him over his eyeglasses.

“What’s the trouble, Shedsy?”

“Nothing, Slim.”

“I thought you looked miffed. Have you seen my small German dictionary?”

THE CHAMELEON

Shedsy shook his head. "I reckon there were two fairy godmothers 'round when I was born," he said, irrelevantly. "One says, 'I'll give him the privilege of having friends and being mighty f-fond of them.' And the other says, 'I'll see to it that he loses them one by one.' Well, that was about a stand-off, wasn't it? B-but I tell you, Slim, the second one g-got in the right c-counter. Yes, sir, she g-got to me, all right, old boy." And here, with Slim's hand upon his shoulder, our story leaves Edgar Baker Barnes, alias Shedsy—a good lad, but a bachelor from the cradle.

Some men will carry unopened all day a letter which they fancy contains unpleasant news, and in the evening open it suddenly, read it steadily, and laugh. They are the last men into a battle, and the last to leave. Bradford, instead of going home, went to the club, and in a quiet corner sat and indulged himself in gloom. When someone came up and spoke to him, he forced himself to be cheerful, but the effort was obvious.

"Bradford is off his feed to-night," said the man to a friend. The friend chuckled. "Haven't you heard?" he answered. "Murdoch, his wife's uncle,

MURDOCH'S BIRTHDAY-GIFT

has given ten million that Bradford was expecting to Carfax College!"

The man grinned. "What an ass Murdoch is!" he commented.

Bradford let himself into the house at midnight. The last reporter had hastened down the steps, and all the place was dark. He went up to his wife's room without hesitation. Amy was asleep, in an attitude characteristic of her, her cheek resting on her hand. He stood and looked at her a long time. What would she say if she knew that he had been the betrayer of Murdoch's secret? At last he went off to bed.

Chapter Nineteen

THE INEVITABLE

The guesses of the newspapers were confirmed in a few days. Dr. Craven handed in his resignation to the Board of Trustees, at the meeting which was called to accept the gift of the Murdoch Fund ; and the board accepted the resignation likewise, and made him speeches of sorrow, and sent him a framed memorial, which cited one by one his services to Carfax College, and said many complimentary things of him such as ought to console any old man who was not *too* full of repining. And moreover, the Board, at Murdoch's suggestion, made him President emeritus, and allowed him two-thirds of his former salary, which had been four thousand dollars a year. Dr. Craven accepted the memorial with calmness and the honor with dignity ; but he declined to remain in the President's house until his successor should be elected. His wife, however,

THE INEVITABLE

used force of a sort, and he reconsidered his determination, reluctantly. And all Carfax buzzed with commendation of the proprietor of the Shakespeare Brand, or if it did not commend it abused him roundly, which was just as satisfactory in the end. Meanwhile Amy said nothing, and Bradford waited for her to speak; and when she did not, concluded, at first doubtfully, then more and more surely, that she knew nothing of his own part in the disclosure of Murdoch's intentions. Indeed, who was to tell her if he did not? Shedsy she never saw; Kate she never saw, and Kate was not the man to mention such a matter anyway. So Bradford grew less and less afraid, and presently the matter dropped gradually from his mind, as the matter of the scar had done, and he was only now and then conscious of any restraint in Amy's tenderness for him. He was the more and more tender with her as her hour came on.

One Thursday, two months after the announcement of the Murdoch Fund, there was a rumor in the afternoon papers that Dr. Craven was stricken—one said with paralysis, one said with some affection of the heart. The morning papers of Friday

THE CHAMELEON

denied both; the afternoon papers of the same day reaffirmed the rumor, and this time with authority. On the following Sunday afternoon, Carfax College was without a president of any sort, and Providence had courteously removed an old obstacle to progress.

He died very quietly. "I am sorry to leave the Commentaries unfinished. Perhaps, my dear boy, you will try—" Kate bent closer, but the Doctor left the sentence, like the Commentaries, unfinished. A moment later, however,

"Why, Isabelle!" he murmured.

"Yes, dear," his wife answered. But he did not hear her. "Why, my little Isabelle!" The newspapers announced his death the next day: George Mark Craven, in the sixty-seventh year of his age; for eleven years professor of the Greek language and literature in Carfax College, and president for twenty-seven.

Then Amy spoke.

.

"Francis, why did you tell Dr. Craven about the money?"

THE INEVITABLE

“ I didn’t, dear.”

“ You told Mr. Barnes.”

“ Not even that, Amy. I suggested the possibility of it to him—but I never thought he would mention it.”

“ Why did you tell him? ”

“ I tell you I didn’t tell him, Amy. I said there was a possibility of a change for Carfax, and Shedsy imagined the rest.”

“ Didn’t you say to him that Uncle Jack was going to give a million a year to Carfax? ”

“ No, Amy, I did not. Why do you cross-examine me like this? Don’t you trust me? If you do not, you ought to say so.”

Her next sentence came after a hesitation, brief indeed, but very long to Bradford. “ Francis, I do say so.”

“ Amy! ”

“ Do you know what I have done? ” she went on, with a calmness terrible to Bradford. “ I have lied for you, Francis.”

“ You are talking wildly, Amy. You ought not to excite yourself, dear. Think of the baby, Amy.”

“ I am not excited, Francis. But I must tell

THE CHAMELEON

you what I feel. I cannot go on longer as I have done. Marion Craven told me, one day, that you had told Mr. Barnes, who had told Mr. Strong. She asked me to thank you for letting them know; she implied that Uncle Jack meant to surprise them all, to let them know suddenly, without warning. I—I let her think so. I did not tell her that he had kept this secret for a year, and that he would have kept it as long as was necessary. You know that I would have died to make you happy, Francis; but I did not think—when I told you I loved you—that you would ever ask me—to lie for you.”

“You are hurting me very cruelly, my wife.”

“I do not mean to hurt you. But we must understand things, Francis. I must know what you intend to do. Are we to go on—like this—always?”

“What do you mean?”

“Am I to feel that I cannot believe a word you say?”

“Amy,” he said, collecting himself, “do you know that you are talking to your husband? I think you do not quite realize all that you are

THE INEVITABLE

saying. I cannot, I ought not, listen to you any longer. To-morrow you will feel differently."

"Will Dr. Craven be alive to-morrow?" she asked, coldly.

"Do you mean that you consider me responsible," he demanded, with the sensitive quickness of perception that was always his, "for Dr. Craven's death? Why, it is absurd." He tried to laugh. "He has been sick for years, dear. Go to sleep, now; to-morrow——"

"It is not that," she said, wearily. "Perhaps you are right; perhaps this shock did not hasten his death. I do not know." Bradford could not help noticing the steadiness of her sense of justice. "But all the other things you have told me—you have not seemed to care what you have said. Once, before we were married, someone warned me that you did not care. I did not believe him; I hated him. I hate him now, but I believe him. No, don't try to stop me. It is better for both of us that there should be no deceit between us. I have tried, ever since we were married—ever since the very day after we were married—to disbelieve him, but how can I? There was that story you told me,

THE CHAMELEON

the first time you came to see me. Afterward, I found that—it was not true. I thought mine was a bitter sorrow, that night—but I did not know what sorrow was. Then, while I was putting that story from me, fighting it off, there were other things. You told people, at dinner, of things that I knew had not happened; but I should not have minded much—they were only stories—if it had not been for the idea I was fighting. And there were times when I had almost fought it down. When I knew the baby was coming I thought—I was sure that I had been all wrong to mistrust you in the least. I don't know why I was sure, but I was. Then—this. You promised Uncle Jack that you would never speak of it. It was not your secret, any more than it was mine; we had no right to speak of it. But you did. And Uncle Jack asked you if you had. And you let him think that you had not." Her voice, monotonous and sad as the ticking of a metronome, ceased.

Bradford, suddenly, surrendered. Surrendered his dignity, surrendered his self-respect, surrendered his pride. "It is true, Amy," he said, under his breath. "It is true. I told Shedsy, and I

THE INEVITABLE

did not tell your uncle. It is all true. But can't you forgive? Don't you know, dear, that you are speaking to me like a judge—not like a wife? I am not as bad as that, dear? I have not forfeited forgiveness? Amy, Amy, my Amy, don't you see that I am begging for it—Francis, who has lied to you, but who loves you, loves you!”

“How am I to know?” she cried, quickly. “You say so; but how am I to know?”

“You mean——”

“I mean that I do not know whether or not you love me!” she repeated, sadly. “What have I to assure me but your word?”

“Love knows love,” he answered, brokenly.

“Can there be love where there is not truth?”

“I do not think,” he said, humbly, “that I have deserved this, but perhaps I have.”

It was as if they had changed places. He was the quiet one now; while Amy—Bradford hardly knew that tense, passionate voice for hers. “Oh, I have loved you, loved you!” she cried. She broke down; her tears came in a flood, as if her heart was broken. He took a step toward her, and, as if she divined it, she sprang to her feet.

THE CHAMELEON

“Don’t touch me,” she panted. “Don’t touch me! How do I know you love me? You have cheated me before—why not in this? What am I—your mistress, or your wife? My baby!—Have you ever told me the truth? Are you in earnest now? You say you suffer. I do not want you to suffer. But do you think I have not suffered at all? But you need not believe me, either, now! I have lied, too! You have taught me all that I know—first to feel, and then to lie! We are alike now; we can neither of us be trusted!” He stood, quite incapable of movement, and she slipped by him, without looking at him again, into her own room, and he heard the key turn in the lock.

.

How odd these little domestic tragedies are, which play themselves out quite unnoticed underneath our noses! Smith and Mrs. Smith are a well-matched couple, are they not? Mutual respect, say the wise ones who are watching them—cool, gray admiration, not the fiery red of love, makes the best background for the picture of comfortable married life. They do not salute each other rapt-

THE INEVITABLE

urously on railway platforms, they are not miserable out of each other's sight; but then, their duties to society are admirably performed! She is a careful hostess; and how excellent are the cigars and claret of Smith! Really, the situation is one fortunate in all respects. Meanwhile, after the guests are gone, what dull ghosts of misery and pain haunt those rooms wherein sit separately and in shadow the admirable hostess and the excellent host!

Murdoch had no knowledge of any break between Bradford and Amy. Bradford was too clever, Amy too strong, to be detected by such a straightforward, unsuspecting man as the pickle-maker. Had he known of the trouble and its cause, Murdoch would have been indignant—with Amy. Bradford pleased Murdoch's love of show. Besides, he was not sorry that his gift had been made public, though by no fault of his. He was not yet forty; he was barely thirty-nine. Carfax College called the first man on the list of eligibles, and he came, stipulating for dictatorial power, and promptly began to turn the wheels of progress. He was almost as young as Murdoch—forty-one; he looked,

THE CHAMELEON

as much as Murdoch did, the business man; he spoke with the sharp decisiveness that finds no time for formal courtesy; and his first act was to reduce the salaries of most of his staff. Some, Kate among them, resigned; others were married, and dared not. The name of the new president was Robinson—Horace Robinson. His “line” was paleontology—or was it petrology? Well, it makes no difference; and his salary was three times what Craven’s had been.

Bradford lived a strange life—the loneliest life, perhaps, that any man can live. Robinson Crusoe, on his island, was not always lonely. Bradford was always lonely. Within ten miles of him were a million people; he spoke to five hundred every day; dozens called him “Frank,” and not one knew him. The round of his days went on as mechanically as a panorama—that childish kind on rollers, which you turn with a crank. He did what was expected of him, said what was expected of him, so ably and so aptly that hardly a soul in Carfax ever guessed he had a care. Amy was all that a wife should be. After that outburst, there was no repetition of reproach, of course. He kissed her

THE INEVITABLE

when he went away to the office, and when he returned. She did her wifely duties, and lived her lonely life, like his.

Sometimes, in these days, the remembrance of his father's story, as it had been written for him, recurred to him with the sharpness of a sword. This was the existence his father had led. He might have hated his father, he thought drearily sometimes; but he did not; rather, he pitied him. The days were long to Bradford, but the routine of the office, the crowd of little duties, kept his mind poised. The nights, however, frightened him, now and then. He lay wide-eyed in the blackness, and saw——

An old-fashioned stone house. He was asleep there, quite alone, in an upper room reached by two steps from the hall. There was the sound of a light foot on the porch below. It came along the hall, reached the steps, and stumbled; someone fell against the door with a crash. Bradford, lifting himself unsteadily upon one elbow, cried, "Who's there?" but not like one expecting an answer. Quick feet scrambled, the door hurled open; there was a rush across the room, and hands at his throat strangled, strangled.

THE CHAMELEON

Again he was in that house—a house he had never seen from the outside. He was sitting in the upper room. Suddenly, at the sound of a cry without, he rose, and moved quickly in the darkness toward the door. He had forgotten the steps, and he fell, with a sharp pain. He could not move. He heard, in the void, the howl of a dog—the whine of deadly fear.

Now he was in the woods, at night. He came upon a clearing, of half an acre perhaps, lighter by contrast with the velvet-gloomy trees. As he stood there, he saw, at his left, a pair of silent, fiery eyes, so near he might have touched them. He fled from he did not know what, stumbling on and on. He fell and was bruised, but he rose and stumbled on. The night and the woods were endless. At last, ahead of him, he saw the line of forest break, and knew that he was free and safe. The revulsion made him dizzy; but he drew himself together with a shout, and ran toward the light, and came upon a clearing, lighter by contrast with the velvet-gloomy trees. Upon his left, so near he might have touched them, he saw the silent, fiery eyes.

He bit his lip till the blood choked him, and he

THE INEVITABLE

knew that he was awake. He remembered his father, at such times, and wondered if he were going insane.

Amy's life seemed changed less even than Bradford's. She read and sewed and dreamed and waited. The spring came, and turned into summer, bringing the anniversary of their engagement, which Murdoch insisted on celebrating with a certain festivity. But Amy had an excellent excuse, in her condition, for avoiding company. In June her baby would be born. Amy longed that it might be a boy. Not only with the old craving for a man-child from the Lord, but—it may have been—partly also because she was afraid that a girl might suffer too much. She might perhaps, some time, wake to the knowledge of life, and then lose her joy in a day. Amy used to wonder—as all women do—whether she was to live or die. There is no pang in the wonder—only dreamy hope and dreamier fear. She did not care for the baby with the passionate sacrificial love she had given her husband. Many a woman loves her husband because he is the father of her children. Some love their children for the father's sake. Such as the latter are

THE CHAMELEON

few, very few; one or two, perhaps, in the circle of our acquaintance. Amy might have been one of those women. But now her heart only stirred tenderly when she thought of the life which was to come of her life. And at length her hour was upon her.

A moment, while the doctor and the nurse were busy without, Bradford slipped into the room. Amy's eyes were shut as he looked at her, but she seemed to know that he was there. He bent over her, and she whispered,

“ You mustn't stay.”

“ Mustn't? ”

“ No. I do not want you.”

She might have struck him, and not approached that cruelty. “ Amy! ” he cried.

“ If you stay,” she whispered, “ I will speak to the doctor.” Her husband went out softly. To the nurse he said,

“ My wife fancies the pain would be worse if I saw her suffering.” The nurse, attributing the dumb pain in his face to sympathy, only nodded.

Hitherto Bradford had clung, in spite of everything, to the hope that his wife might be convinced

THE INEVITABLE

of his love, and come back to him; might not love him, perhaps, with the flush of joy he had seen in her eyes when he married her, but might love him still. To cling to that hope longer was very hard. She did not want him; she would not let him try to comfort her. She did not want him—that was it. Her need of him was dead; he had killed it utterly. He knew that, and he knew that never had he loved her and needed her as he did now. It was strange to him to think that he, Francis Bradford, the clever man, could be so helpless as he was. He wanted his wife, and she—did not want him.

They brought him his son to look at in the early morning. His wife, they said with satisfaction, was doing well.

.

Sometimes, as she lay with her baby beside her, realizing him—sometimes Amy would remember how she had thought of him before he was born; how she had half-fancied it would be sweeter for both of them to go away into the dark together at the moment of his birth; how she had wondered whether she really wanted anything except rest.

THE CHAMELEON

At such times she laughed, or else, hating herself, she murmured to him over and over, "I did not know, I did not know," trying to excuse herself to him for the fancies. "My dear, a baby is only an incident," Marion Craven laughed once, when Amy had been trying to explain her unconscious treachery before Boy's birth. "You mustn't be idolizing a step in evolution, you know."

"He hasn't a bit of a mark anywhere on his whole body," was Amy's answer. "He is absolutely perfect."

Her joy in Boy made her often thoughtful of her own mother, who had only borne the agony, and hardly tasted the happiness. Amy longed to be able to reach out her hand and touch her mother's somewhere. She would whisper to the dark, "Can you see that I am very happy now, dear? I hope you can see that." She dreamed of her mother; and from this rose a strange fancy that, when Boy was asleep, he, too, was in his grandmother's sight—that his grandmother was watching over him. Will it be believed that when this fancy first came to Amy she experienced a quick pang of jealousy, and so smothered the sleeping Boy with kisses that he

THE INEVITABLE

woke—as she had intended? But afterward she grew used to the thought, and tried only to sleep herself, so as to pass the time away until she might see him again.

Boy grew, and waxed fat, if not intelligent; and cried, and was fed, and slept, and woke, and cried again. There is really less excuse for the mother-instinct in humanity than anywhere else in the animal kingdom; not a kitten or a puppy but is more interesting to the honest, casual observer than are the very young of humankind. Boy's great-uncle was keenly disappointed in him, though he loved him fondly. It seemed to Murdoch that Amy's baby should have exhibited some appreciation of the world by the end of the second day, at least. But Boy remained, like the rest of his kind, stupid for an interminable time. He had no other name than Boy. Murdoch was fertile of suggestions, but Amy smiled at them all—except when he urged her to call the baby Frank. He was doing that one evening when Bradford interrupted.

“I shouldn't like that,” he said. “If Boy had been a girl, I shouldn't have wanted him named for Amy. There is only one Amy Bradford for me.

THE CHAMELEON

Perhaps Amy feels the same way about this." He looked at his wife, greatly daring, thinking that she must give him anyway the cold comfort of an assenting nod. But she only wrapped Boy's shawl a little closer round him while he slept, and went on looking at him. Murdoch, however, who was used to her quietness, supposed that she agreed with her husband, and ceased to clamor for Frank. So Boy remained only Boy. What need had his mother for a special name? She had thousands of names for him, little inarticulate murmurous cries, suited to such a little, inarticulate bit of life as Boy.

When he was a trifle older she began to take pictures of him. It was a passion, more than an amusement, with her. She took pictures of Boy in all moods and in all attitudes, but by far the fewest were of him laughing. He seldom laughed. He was more like his mother than his father in many ways, but especially in this one. You might play with him, and talk to him, and sing to him—he watched you with a round, unwinking stare, estimated your value, and forgot all about you. He was not fond of strangers. He even cried when his great-uncle held him, to the annoyance of the es-

THE INEVITABLE

timable pickle-maker. But it was Bradford's one bit of joy that Boy loved him, and would go to him almost out of his mother's arms. Bradford did not care for Boy as he cared for Amy—by no means; but it was his nature to expand to the love of anything which loved him, and so he expanded to his little son. Boy was very near to Bradford's heart. He sang little foolish tunes to him; talked broken baby-talk, a thing which he had all his life despised so much that he blushed in the presence of it; he carried Boy for hours against his shoulder, in the crook of his elbow. It was his father who first showed Boy the sunshine and the trees, the day that Boy was three weeks old, and swore upon his honor that Boy had laughed at sight of them. Yet even with the new bond between them, Bradford was no closer to his wife. Free as he was when he was alone with Boy, he turned awkward and self-conscious in Amy's presence. Love for her and contempt for himself made him afraid.

Well, Boy lived six months, till the winds of December came crying from the north, and then the baby died as peacefully as he had lived; fretting a little, murmuring a little, moaning a little, and so

THE CHAMELEON

off to sleep. Of what use were those six months? Boy had never said a word. He had not even received a name—the little, indistinguishable atom among myriads had never even been marked by the individuality of a name. A bit of a breeze, the ripple of a river, the leaf of a forest—that was Boy. A little grave, some pictures and some little clothes, and the ache in the heart—those were the remembrances of Boy. So much space as he has been given—why, it is all out of proportion to Boy!

When Boy had been buried five days Bradford went to his wife, feeling that he could no longer stand the life he was living.

“Oh, my darling, my darling!” It seemed as if she must hear, and must know that now he was in earnest. He had only the single longing to comfort his wife, and be comforted if he could. He wanted to take her in his arms, to confess his fault over and over; to find his wife again above the grave of his son. He had loved Boy so sincerely, he did not think that Amy could repulse his desire to share her sorrow. They were alone now, they had only each other. He could offer his wife no

THE INEVITABLE

reparation, he could not even promise that he would always be what she would have him—trustworthy ; but he knew that love demands no reparation, and asks no promises, choosing rather to forgive seventy times seven. All his feeling rang in cry.

“ What is it? ” she answered.

“ Won’t you come back to me, Amy? ”

“ I don’t know what you mean, Francis. Have I ever left you? ”

“ Can’t you forgive me? ”

“ Forgive you for what? ”

“ Amy,” he said, unsteadily. “ This isn’t like you, dear. I’ve not deserved this.”

“ I am too tired to guess what you mean, Francis.”

“ I mean that I love you so much I cannot go on like this! If you have made up your mind that you cannot care for me, if I am hateful to you, as I seem to be, I will go away somewhere out of your sight. I am not what you thought I was, I have confessed it; I make mistakes, and I did give away your uncle’s secret. But I am not as bad as you think me, Amy. I never deserved the love you gave

THE CHAMELEON

me, I know. But no more do I deserve to have it all taken away. Is it all gone, Amy? Don't you care for me at all?" He said it very badly and haltingly, and she answered him at once.

"You speak of deserving, as if I had made up my mind to love you or not to love you. It isn't so, Francis. I never made a resolution about you. There is something dead in me, that is all. Once I cared about things, but I couldn't let anyone know. Then, when you came, I cared so much more about you than about anything else that I could tell you. But I found out afterward that the man I loved had never existed. How can I love another one when he asks me? If I could have what I asked for, I should ask that Boy might come back to me; but he can't do that, and neither can the love I had once. Why should you ask me to forgive you? There is nothing to forgive; things happen so, that is all; you couldn't help being yourself. Why should you think I hate you? Why should you go away? You know that I expect to live with you all my life."

"If you thought your love for me would come back, would you pray to have it, Amy?"

THE INEVITABLE

“ Oh, I don’t know,” she answered, wearily. “ I don’t know. What is the use of talking? ”

“ How can you be so hard? ” he cried.

“ Hard? ” she repeated. “ Am I? Isn’t it you who were hard, to take my love, to take everything, and not to love me? Francis, you know that I am made all one way. I know there are people who can make allowances, but I can’t; I must trust entirely, or I can’t trust at all. If I could I would believe that you love me, as you say you do, and I will try, if it will make you happier. I don’t want to be hard.” She broke off suddenly, as if there were no more use of words. As he said nothing, she got up presently, and, going to the window, stood looking out. There was snow on the ground. He knew of what she was thinking—knew that she had forgotten his very existence. He fixed his resolution while he stood there.

Chapter Twenty

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

Clarges, as his custom was on Friday mornings, sat writing out his sermon for the next Sunday. He liked to fix his thoughts by setting them down, though when he was before his congregation he did not always adhere to the words which suggested themselves to him in his study. On this particular Friday no words would come. The rector was physically spent. The previous day had been the twelfth of the month, and he had fasted—a private fast he always kept; it was the day he had decided, years before, to abandon his father's business and go about the Lord's. Unfortunately, to-day was a fast-day also, and Clarges had breakfasted upon crackers and water. He was used to rigid simplicity, even to austerity of living, but forty-eight hours on crackers is not conducive to easy thinking. Besides, his brain seemed less under control than

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

usual. He could not keep his mind off Amy Bradford, as he had seen her, quiet and tearless, at Boy's funeral a few days before. Clarges was used to funerals, and accustomed to displays of sorrow hypocritical and sincere, well-bred and uncouth, hopeless and comfortable; but Amy's face baffled and troubled him. He wondered what she was thinking of, as she sat listening—if she listened—to the words which rounded off the life of Boy. He wondered how she had found life, since her marriage. He knew that the death of her son had hurt her terribly, but he knew, too, that her life was before her still, and if she cared for her husband as she had cared for him when she married him, she would still be desperately glad that she had a life to live out. If she did not care—Clarges shivered. He could not help fearing that in such case she would have preferred to die with her son.

He rose, and began to walk up and down the room, thinking. He drew out a pipe mechanically, and then put it back. A queer thing about Clarges was that he never smoked when he was alone. From Amy his thoughts drifted to her husband. Once he had supposed that when Bradford and his

THE CHAMELEON

wife found each other out, as they must some day, the suffering would all be Amy's. He had anticipated for Bradford only anger and disenchantment when he discovered that his wife was the stronger of the two. Once he had expected that conceit would come to Bradford's assistance, and shield him from any unpleasant shock. But, as the year had gone by, and he had had glimpses of Bradford's attitude toward Amy, Clarges doubted whether matters were to be arranged so easily for Amy's husband. When the break came, as it must come, Clarges suspected that both would be hurt.

The little girl who acted as maid to the clergy-house of St. Hilda's knocked at the door.

"There is a gentleman to see you, Father."

"Who is he, Norah?"

"I asked him, Father, and he said just to tell you a gentleman."

"I must know who he is. If he won't give his name, tell him I'm busy."

She retired, and came back with a card, on which was written, "I. H. S."

Clarges turned the card over and over in his fingers. Why had the man not sent up his name?

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

Why this curious appeal? "Show him up, Norah," he said. He sat down hastily, filled his pipe, and was smoking when Bradford entered. He rose, however, and shook hands.

"Have a chair. Pipe?"

"No, thank you."

The rector, looking at Bradford, was astonished. The younger man had aged, in a week, so that he seemed the elder. They sat without speaking for five minutes; then Bradford said, abruptly,

"Do you know what I'm here for?"

Clarges looked at the card, which he still held, but said nothing. Had the break come, then?

"You know what sort of a man I am, don't you?" said Bradford, bitterly. "You've known ever since the first time we met, haven't you? And you haven't always kept the knowledge to yourself, have you? Yes; I mean you have told my wife. Never mind. God knows I'm past bearing malice. Sometimes I think you even did me a service. She was so set on hating you, and proving you wrong, that she didn't find me out as soon as she would have, otherwise. Well, I've come to give you the satisfaction of a confession."

THE CHAMELEON

"You'd better lie down," said the rector. "I don't believe you're well."

"I'm perfectly well, thanks. I'm as well as I ever shall be. Sit down. I know what I'm talking about."

Clarges, studying his guest, sat still as he was ordered.

"You've always known I wasn't—well, not quite certain about the truth, haven't you? Don't trouble to answer. I know what you think. You saw through me the first time we met. You didn't like me, on account of—well, you know; but besides that, you understood me. Few men do; I'm too clever for most of them. I always wondered how you knew." He stopped a moment; the rector did not take the pipe from his lips, but the smoke ceased to curl up from the bowl.

"Did you ever guess," Bradford went on, "that once in a while I was actually deceiving myself, as well as other people? I don't suppose that such a subtlety appeals to your nature. You're like—you're the sort of man that knows exactly what he believes, and that finishes it. Perhaps I've fooled and lied so long, I'm denied your exalted point of

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

view ; but I've made up my mind to try for it, for a little while. I've set out to be absolutely honest for the time I've got left ; and this that I'm telling you is the first instalment of my honesty. I'm going to ask you a straightforward question, too—something I've never done before. You were in love with my wife, of course ; that was plain enough ; why did you try to make up to me ? You never disguised the fact that you saw through me, but you did run after me for a while. What was that for ? ”

“ Because I loved your wife, as you say ; though she was not your wife then.”

“ Well ? ”

“ I thought I knew what kind of a man you were, but I wanted to make sure.”

“ Why ? ”

“ I thought, if I was right, there was probably unhappiness ahead for her ; and I loved her, and should have liked to have saved her from it.”

“ It would have been a d——d sight better for all of us if you had married her, instead of me.”

“ I never should have married her.”

THE CHAMELEON

“ You would have if you could.”

“ No.”

“ You asked her once, you know. Don’t lie, Father ; leave that to me.”

“ Yes, I asked her. But I knew my case was hopeless ; if I had not known that, I shouldn’t have asked her.”

Bradford frowned. “ You talk riddles. Don’t make me lose my faith in you, too.”

The rector laid his pipe upon the table. The amber mouth-piece was half-bitten through. “ Your faith in me? ”

“ You married me ; you buried my baby. You’re my minister, by the conventions. Let me ask you a question. Do you believe in a God? ”

Clarges nodded.

“ A heaven, of course? ”

“ Yes.”

“ And a hell? ”

“ Here,” said Clarges, but inaudibly, and the jet Christ quivered on his breast.

“ Complete outfit of terms,” laughed Bradford, disagreeably. “ Well, minister, that God of yours has scored off me.”

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

“Look here,” repeated Clarges, watching him narrowly, “don’t you know you’re not well?”

“I shall be well enough by to-morrow, minister.”

Clarges went to a drawer and fetched a flask and glass. “Drink this.”

“I never touch it, minister. Don’t you know I have no vices?”

Suddenly Clarges crossed to him, and put his hand on his shoulder. “Poor lad!” he said, softly. “Oh, poor lad!” Bradford laid his head upon his arms, and a dry, tearless sob escaped him.

“She doesn’t think I love her, Father,” he said, pitifully. “She doesn’t believe I love her!”

The rector’s lips worked curiously, as he stood looking down. He licked them with his tongue, like a man afraid. Bradford and he had never liked each other, and he did not like Bradford now, but he was sorry for him. Bradford knew that, and was a little comforted. Strong men despise pity; weak men only profess to, and crave it when the strain comes.

“Frank,” said the rector, “you have just said that by the conventions I am your minister. You know, too, that once I tried to tell your wife, be-

THE CHAMELEON

fore she was your wife, what I thought about you. May I go and tell her what I think now? ”

“ You believe that I love her? ”

“ God help you! Yes, I believe you do.”

“ She doesn’t.”

“ May I talk to her? You said you had faith in me.”

“ What good will it do? You don’t think I came here this morning for that? ”

“ No. And I may do no good. But——”

“ Speak to her if you want. When shall you see her? ”

“ This afternoon.”

Bradford hesitated. Then he drew a letter from his breast-pocket. “ When you’ve said all you can, give her this. I’ve always tried to keep it out of her sight; but now it can’t do me any harm, at least. Give it to her, and tell her to burn it; I sha’n’t need it any longer. Good-by, Clarges. I must go to the office. I have my work to do, you know. I was on my way when I thought of you, and just decided to try my new honesty. Come and see me at three. I will wait till then. But you will fail.” He went away, nevertheless, with a

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

little flicker of hope in his heart—the hope of the drowning man when he sees the straw.

Clarges, left alone, did not return to his sermon, but walked up and down, thinking over what he had heard, and what he meant to say to Amy. He had no doubt that Bradford was in earnest. His last scrap of hesitation vanished just before he put his hand on Bradford's shoulder, and offered to speak to his wife. He wondered if she would receive him at all, or listen to him. He thought she would—though she had once ordered him never to speak to her again. To disobey her now was only another penance that he inflicted on himself; he was always inflicting them, of one sort and another. But to plead for her husband he needed his brain clear, so he rang for Norah and ordered a luncheon. She was puzzled, since it was a fast-day; but she was used to the vagaries of Father Clarges, and would cheerfully have cut off her little nose and served it to him on Good Friday had she fancied he wanted it. Servants, children, and dogs adored Clarges; shopmen and his curates disliked him. Both feelings were certificates of good character.

He saw Amy, in the afternoon, at the same little

THE CHAMELEON

table where he had seen her months before and found out certainly that she disliked him. As at the former time, she was reading; but he did not take the book from her hand, nor did she give him cause to. She had the same steady, empty look upon her face that she had borne at the baby's funeral—a look which any careless person might have translated as meaning that she did not care; there had been plenty to give it just that interpretation. It must be confessed that Amy was not popular. The look had hitherto baffled Clarges, but he thought he held the key now to her heart as well as her character, and so he understood it.

He blessed the good fortune which made preliminaries unnecessary with Amy, and began at once to tell her of his morning's interview with her husband. He told it very calmly, but very earnestly, speaking more rapidly than she had ever heard him speak before.

“Frank is in a very desperate condition, Mrs. Bradford,” he said. “He is possessed of the idea that he cannot make you believe he loves you; he is quite hopeless of proving it to you; and the worry over it is killing him.”

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

She listened without answering.

“I do not think he will be responsible for his acts,” went on the rector, slowly, “unless his mind is relieved in some way.”

“He—my husband—asked you to tell me this?”

“No. I offered. I remembered very well that you had once asked me never to speak to you again. You know that I would not, if I could help it, offend you. So you can judge whether I think this matter serious.”

“And what did he and you agree that I was to say to you, Father Clarges?”

“He told me that my coming would do no good. He told me that you were so thoroughly sure of your own righteousness, that you had no room for kindness in your heart. No; he did not use those words, Mrs. Bradford. He did not even think them. But if it is true that you are to answer me as he said you would, then those words are true of you.”

“What do *you* want me to say?”

“I want you to tell him that you love him, whether you do or not. You can save his mind in no other way, Mrs. Bradford.”

“It would do no good,” she answered, impa-

THE CHAMELEON

tiently. "He would only look at me, and he would know what I was thinking of him. He always knows what I am thinking of him. I should not hesitate to give you the message you want, since you think his condition requires it. But it would do no good."

"And you do not think he cares for you? I remember very well, I tell you, what I said to you once, in this house, about Frank Bradford. I am not forgetting it when I assure you that if I ever saw love for a woman in a man's heart, or heard it in his voice, I saw it and heard it to-day."

"You saw it? You heard it?" she repeated. "Father Clarges, you do not, you cannot understand either of us. You understand me better than you do my husband; so, perhaps, since he has chosen to confide in you, I may do the same. How can you tell what my husband feels? It is quite impossible, because—he does not feel. It is all acting—acting. I am sure that when he talked to you this morning he was in earnest—yes, I am just as sure of that as I am that a little while from now he will not be in earnest over me, but over something else. How can *you* tell? *You* cannot understand

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

at all. My husband is never himself, he is the man that other people are expecting him to be. Once I told you I did not like you, and it was quite true. It is quite true still. I think you care too little for anybody to deserve liking. I think that you are hard and selfish. But at least you are honest. You live your own life, not a thousand other lives. So you cannot understand my husband."

"I think I understand him far better than you do, Mrs. Bradford. I will tell you why," he added. She did not speak.

"Amy," he said, going back to his old address. "Amy, years ago there was a young fellow in college with me who was very like your husband. He not only wondered what other people thought of him, but he would do and say things to make them think of him. If he was applied to for information, he often gave it whether he had it or not, rather than show ignorance; and he lied to fill gaps. I don't know whether you would call it lying; it was done almost unconsciously. He was simply swept on by this desire of his to be noticed, and carried, often, very much farther than he meant. Then, one day, his eyes were opened

THE CHAMELEON

to himself. I needn't tell you how; but it was a bitter day for him. He saw himself just as he was, a sounding-board and no more. He hated himself. He was not a bad man, not even a very weak one; and he tried to reform. He tried to be exactly himself, and say exactly what he felt, at all times. But he soon found that he was failing. He was still exaggerating, adapting—in a word, lying. Do you know what he did? He took refuge in eccentricity. He had tried to cure his fault, and failed; very well, he thought, then he would be revenged on himself. Whenever he became aware that he was wondering what anybody thought of him he turned rude and harsh. Of course that alienated the people. So he became friendless; I won't say unpopular, because there were certain qualities about him which made him necessary to the college life; but friendless. He was very lonely. He found life very miserable. But, like all men of his temperament, he was an excellent actor, and he did not show his misery. So gradually he won a reputation for himself as a rude, clever, solitary man, who cared nothing for the applause of anybody; refused it; had no use for it. So the ap-

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

plause followed him. When he saw that he turned more unsocial still, and it followed him more insistently. If he had been a dull man, or a weak man in other ways, this mightn't have happened! but he was not dull or weak—except in this one thing.

When he left college, he cast about for a profession. He still had the idea that he must keep himself under; so he decided on the profession that subjugates a man most to the service of other people. That is the ministry. This man undertook the training and learned—many things. He learned that his theological school was a school for scandal; that gossip and triviality of thought and meanness flourished in it, such as the few noble men labored in vain to root out; that the study was not theology, but diplomacy, and cheap diplomacy at that. Yes, he was disillusioned; but he went through it, and entered the church. The same popularity followed him. He knew that he was looking for it, and at heart craving it; so he adopted the same repressive policy as before; and, as before, his popularity only increased. He became well known, and gained a large church. That was seven or eight years ago.

THE CHAMELEON

What is he now? The same man—the same man he was years ago in college—conscious still, in every nerve and fibre of him, of the opinions around him; eager to be noticed; and an actor in everything he does. He would do this, and therefore he does the other thing. He would like to be the centre of a group, so he plays the hermit. He would rather be thought saintly, so he smokes his pipe in people's company, and treads on their pet ideas. He has got his reputation, now, just as he had it in college. People think him rude, selfish, and honest. He is in reality rude, selfish, and as disingenuous as a man can be. You say I do not understand your husband, Amy? I tell you I understand him as you never can, for I have been through the dark places before him. I understood him when he came to see me to-day. He has been what God made him, and he is bitterly punished for it. I thought once *I* had tasted a little agony, but I see now that I never did. I told you that I remembered what I had said to you here one day. I do not take back a word of it. I told you then that I should not ask you to marry me, if I dreamed you would. You thought I was only insulting

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

you. Do you see now what I meant? I was afraid for us, as I was afraid for you and your husband. But I tell you this to-day: you may not love your husband—that I know nothing of—but that he loves you, you cannot doubt. I am a man exactly like him; and I know.”

“And what am I to do?”

“Not to think of him as worse than he is. To believe in him because he fights himself, and to forgive him what he fights against. That is all I can say. You know, much better than I can know, all your husband’s splendid qualities. You know that he is courteous, that he is courageous, that he is gentle, that he is clever. Love these, and for the rest forgive him, because he does not forgive himself, and because he loves you—as he does.”

Her gray eyes—so young still—were dull and sad as she asked,

“Are you sure he even knows these things? Are you sure he would rather be just himself?”

“You cannot take my word for it—the word of a man who has walked the same road?”

“Yes,” she said, “I think I do believe you. But——”

THE CHAMELEON

He drew out the letter which Bradford had given him. "I have no idea what is in this," he said, "but your husband asked me, when I had said all that I could, to give it to you, and ask you to read it."

She took it, and read the address. It was an old letter, frayed by handling; and it was not addressed to her. She had seen it once before. "To my Mother in Heaven." She opened it, while Clarges went to the window, and stood looking out.

"I have read your letter to me," it began, abruptly. "What was there in my father which has come down to me? You saw to-night that I could not tell the least little story exactly as it happened. Why did I lie about the conductor? I did not mean to. It came out before I was aware. I only wanted to make the story sound well. Do you call that lying, up where you are? Perhaps I should not have called it so before I had your letter, but things seem different now.

"Am *I* going to wear out my emotions, and grow tired of everything? Why do I suspect that Shedsy is fonder of Kate, and even of Slim, than he

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

is of me? Why do I care, so long as he is fond of me, to have him fonder of me than of anybody else? And you know that it isn't only Shedsy; it's everyone; I want them all—*all*—to like me best. Yet they don't. Why should they? I wonder if I am honest in asking that question, or do I really think I am cleverer and pleasanter than the rest, even while I'm denying it? God knows, and you know, too, I suppose, mother. What is this thing that besets me? Do I care, really, what people think of me; really want them to like me? If I did, wouldn't I take more pains to make them like me? You know I take no pains. It is rather a curious thing to boast about, but I don't take pains. I will set it down squarely, as the truth—I don't care whether people like me or not. What then? Is it only that I want them to notice me—have I fallen that low now?

“You want me to be ‘genuine.’ Aren't we all what we are? Do you think I get any pleasure out of capering and grinning to amuse people? Do you think I am pleased with myself when I catch myself wondering what Tom, Dick, and Harry in the street-car are thinking about me;

THE CHAMELEON

when I raise my voice so they can hear me say something witty? Do you think I like to know that I give the best of me, the cheap best of me, to anybody I happen to meet for five minutes? Do you think I like to keep pumping and pumping and pumping, when I'm with my friends, for fear they should find out that the reservoir is all empty—that I gave it all to a man who went by half an hour ago and will never think of me again? Forgive me for these questions; I know you know that it is all torture to me; only, your letter made me think of these things, and thinking of them hurts. Why do I do them all? Isn't it because I can't help it? And isn't that being genuine?

“Mother, it doesn't help me to tell me to be genuine. Don't you see, that only makes me think about myself, and thinking about myself is all the trouble. If I could only forget myself for a little while, forget myself completely, I would go in rags, I might treat people like a brute, but God! I should be happy! If only, for a little while, I might stop thinking of myself, of what I ought to do, and just *do*! Mother, you have the ear of God, I am sure, for you were honest when you were on earth,

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

and you suffered. So won't you take this prayer of mine and lay it at His feet—a petition to the King? God, let me feel! Hate, or love, or agony, or happiness, just let me feel! This is my answer, mother, to your letter. You know it all, already, I am sure. Don't desert me, don't hate me for it. Don't forget that I am your son. Francis Howell Bradford." And there was a postscript in pencil. "God forgive me; I know you never can. It is quite true; while I wrote, I was conscious that I was writing well. Well, this is good-by."

"Were you to see him, Father Clarges?"

"Yes."

"Tell him—tell him I believe him, please." Her voice was empty of expression. Clarges looked at her; then he hurried on his errand.

Looking at his watch, he saw that he could not even reach the car-line before three—the hour when he was to meet Bradford. There was a recollection in Clarges's mind of which he had said nothing to Amy. He did not admit that he was worried, but remembrance of Bradford's face and actions, of his final remark—"I will wait for you until three"—spurred him on. Nevertheless, the rector's heart

THE CHAMELEON

was higher, as he rode down toward Galton's, than it had been for a long time. Like Bradford, he had tasted honesty; and though it left him conscious of himself, he felt that at least his effort had not been thrown away. As he was thinking of this the car stopped, and seemed to remain still for a long time. Clarges looked out, and saw a line of cars ahead.

"How long is this going to last?" he demanded of the conductor. "Maybe five minutes," said that functionary; and Clarges waited impatiently five, seven minutes; then they moved on slowly. They stopped again half a block on; five minutes more, and they had not yet started. Clarges, he did not know why, began to grow very anxious. He almost began to wish that he had telephoned Bradford to wait. He decided, if nothing happened in three minutes, to take a cab. The interminable three minutes came to an end, and he walked quickly down the street, looking for a cab. He had one at length, and was rattling away down-town. With every step his anxiety increased, and he told himself he was a fool. What had Bradford meant by that sentence of his—"I shall be well, this time

THE RECTOR SPEAKS

to-morrow " ? Probably nothing. Yet it seemed to Clarges that he must get out and run ; anything to lessen the time before he reached Bradford's office. He got there at last. It was five minutes past four. The elevator crawled up to the top floor, not fast enough for his hurry. He asked the red-uniformed attendant for Bradford.

" Mr. Bradford has just gone, sir."

" Gone? "

" Yes, sir."

" Impossible! He had an appointment with me."

" At what time, sir? "

" At three."

" It is five minutes past four. He left at four."

" Does he always go so early? "

" Not often, sir."

" Did he say where he was going? "

" No, sir."

Clarges, with a heavy heart, went out, wondering.

Chapter Twenty-One

THE ROAD OUT

Bradford waited twenty minutes; half an hour; three-quarters—but Clarges did not come. Fingering the pen upon his desk, the dulness of certainty lying upon his heart, Bradford waited. But at last, when an hour was up, he rose. If the rector came now, it could only be that he would bring bad news, the worst news, the final news; and Bradford preferred not to listen to the retailing of *that* again.

“Oh, Mr. Stebbins, just see that that demurrer is filed before five o’clock, please. I shall not be back this afternoon.”

“Yes, sir.”

Bradford wondered whether the clerk would use that dull, disinterested tone, if he knew that his superior would not return the next day, either; nor the next; nor the next; nor any day thereafter. As he went out Bradford turned at the door and

THE ROAD OUT

looked back. His desk was in a cheerful, sunny spot. It was odd to think that he should never see the light creep down the curtains any more!

He dropped into a drug-store next door, where he had not infrequently made purchases, and asked for ten eighth-grain morphine powders.

"Insomnia?" inquired the clerk, sympathetically, as he filled the order.

"Oh—very slight, now and then. But these are for someone else. I fancied perhaps you wouldn't sell them without a prescription?"

The clerk laughed. "I guess we can trust you, Mr. Bradford. They lose their strength, unless they're kept carefully."

"I know. But I think they'll last as long as my friend needs them," returned Bradford, carelessly. "What an unholy thing it would be to fall into the habit of swallowing these things, eh? Turn a man yellow as brown paper, I suppose?" He stared curiously at the packet.

"I guess. Lots of folks use the stuff, though; squirt it into themselves. It's the curse of the country; coming to be, anyway." The cheerful answer reminded Bradford of Miss Mangler.

THE CHAMELEON

“ Good-afternoon,” he said.

“ That’s what I call a gentleman,” remarked the clerk, when Bradford had gone. He spoke to a loungee by the cigar-case. “ Polite, he is, and sharp as a razor. Never comes in here but he says something worth listening to. Well, he’d ought to be happy. He’s old Murdoch’s son-in-law, he is.”

“ That feller? ”

“ Imp-h’m. He only works when he feels like it, and spends the rest of his time kiddin’ around. I could be gay myself, with that snap.”

“ Yah! Gimme some pennies, Jack; I’m goin’ to break your machine.”

Bradford decided to walk home. This would be his last opportunity. Somehow, though his resolution was fixed and quite untroubled, he felt that he would put his purpose off that little while. It made no difference whether he died at half-past four or at five. “ I fancy the trains to where I’m going are run to suit the passengers,” he thought. He lingered down the street, looking into the faces of the people he passed, as they hastened by with the set look of people who must not be detained. *They* were in a hurry. Where were they going? To an

THE ROAD OUT

appointment? So was he. Home? And he. Perhaps to bargain and sell? That, at least, was over for him. So he speculated. His brain, which was always clear and sharp, was clearer and sharper than ever. He had that sense of extra senses which had now and then possessed him before, as, for instance, on the night of the wreck, when he came to Carfax. He saw everything—the goods in the windows, the signs of the stores, the traffic in the street, and the expressions on the faces of the passers-by—a dozen of those tiny dramas which we let go unheeded every day: the long hand-grip of two men on a street-corner, and the sarcastic grin on the face of one as he turned away; the flash of a thievish newsboy up an alley, with an orange under his coat; the progress of a girl and a young man across the street, oblivious of everything but themselves. He heard everything—the clatter of the pedler's toys, the rumble of the wagons, broken fragments of sentences from those around him, the ring of hammers on a building, the drip-drip of water where a great plate-glass window had been freshly washed. He smelled everything—the manufactured perfume of the bunch of gummy carna-

THE CHAMELEON

tions thrust into his face, the fragrance of orris-root as a woman hurried by, the sour odor of cooking from a basement kitchen, the exhalations of the roadway. Yet, keen as his senses were, he walked in a dream all the time, unspeculative on all but the one topic—what would these people think if they knew what he was on his way to do?

Suddenly, in his reverie, he was aware of a team bearing down upon him at a crossing, and he leaped quickly to safety. A policeman spoke to him sternly. "Mind where ye're goin', now. They'll be over ye yet."

"Thank you, officer. I saw it in time, though." Strange, curious human heart, he mused! He was going to his death, and yet instinctively he had dodged the chance which would have made his walk unnecessary.

Now he was in the region of the billboards, and great, gaudy advertisements screamed at him in all colors and shapes. Among them, of course, were the quotations of the Shakespeare Brand, and, over and over, Murdoch's face watching him. It gave no sign of fright or pity—was not that curious? What would Murdoch be thinking by to-morrow?

THE ROAD OUT

But his lithographs, no matter what he thought, would go on roaring his wares through the satiated land, and his face would look as happy as ever—a good sort of a man to clash a stein with, as Bradford had thought once. Bradford was aware that his pace was very slow, and he quickened it; walking on through the mile of small, tawdry, dirty shop-fronts with the shopkeepers tilted back on a wooden chair before the door. They would sit just so to-morrow, if it were a fine day, without the slightest knowledge or care that the tall, slight, well-dressed young man who had looked at them so eagerly the day before would never look at anything again. Then, he had got among the mansions on the avenue; he met and spoke gayly to a few people he knew, reached Murdoch's house, let himself in quietly, and went up to his own room without seeing a soul.

He sat down at once to his desk. He had three letters to write, and he wrote them rapidly, without hesitation, one directly after the other—one to Clarges, one to his mother, one to his wife.

“I know that you have done what you could, and of course I'm obliged to you, but I knew be-

THE CHAMELEON

forehand that you would fail. Still, I'm not sorry I told you about it, for I had to tell someone. That was because I am a weak man. You, being strong, cannot guess what weakness is. There was a time when I disliked you because you disliked me. Of course, it makes no difference to me now what you think of me; and yet, oddly enough, I dislike you still. I may as well be honest, since this is my only chance. I respect you highly, and thank you, but I don't like you. You'll wonder why at this particular minute I stop to say so. I hardly know. Or yes, I do; I don't want to go to my death leaving a lie behind for you. Good-by, and thank you again."

"It is foolish to be writing you, mother, since I shall know in a very few minutes whether your belief or my want of belief is the truer to things as they are. If you were right about your heaven, and so on, my chances of seeing you are not worth much; we shall belong to different worlds, I'm afraid. There are only two worlds, though; the false, and the true. I believe firmly that I am cutting loose from both, and ending all my troubles, but perhaps I am only getting into others. At

THE ROAD OUT

least they can't be worse than these, and you know I always liked change.

“Do you remember the little prayer you made for me, once? It was pretty coldly answered, wasn't it? I go the road my father went, only I haven't his consideration for my family. Prayers are dull things, mother. I made one, once, and They, whoever They are—or was it just Luck?—answered it. I wanted to feel, and be myself. That was allowed me. But They are ironical, after all. They let me be myself, as far as suffering was concerned, and then They left me false in other things. Wasn't that like a cat with a mouse, though! Take your cat-Gods, mother; forget your son; he and they are not for each other. He will stick to his old theory of Luck.

“Well, dear, this is pretty harsh, isn't it? I ought surely to write more kindly things to a dead mother. But you see, though I have been living lies all my life, I don't care to die with one on my lips. I have got pretty far down, but I think I have found myself, down here, and know what I am, now; there isn't any use of further talking, is there? That was what Amy said to me once. Do

THE CHAMELEON

you know Amy? She has been worth while—never forget that, mother. I never got to say good-by to you, do you remember? You were gone when I saw you. This is my good-by. Luck or the cat-Gods, whichever it is, we shall never see each other any more. So good-by, good-by, my mother.”

“ You think me untrue, not to you, but to myself. Believe me, Amy dear, I am dying with no lie on my lips when I say for the last time—I love you. I know that the kindly and courteous thing would be to fill this letter with rot, such as I could easily write, which would make you mind less that I had killed myself. But I have been shamming and sham-polite too long; I am past the kindly and courteous thing, now. I want you to care. I want you to know there was something about me that was genuine, even if it was only genuine brutality, which took a time like this to prove itself. Believing that, can you believe that I loved Boy, and that I love you? Well, that’s all. I’m pretty tired, and I’ll say good-night, dear.”

He got a glass of water and a spoon, and, taking the little packet of powders in his hand, opened it.

THE ROAD OUT

Then he measured the powders into the water—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. They made a cloudiness as they sank. After a moment he added the last two, brushing off the clinging grains solicitously with his little finger. He stirred the water with the spoon. How curious it seemed to be doing this as calmly as if he were only going to sleep! He set the glass down, and addressed the three envelopes; then, laying the letters to his wife and to the rector side by side, he slowly burned the letter to his mother. He held it, with his mind on other things, till the flame reached up and touched his finger, so that he winced. Then—what chord did that strike? He threw back his head and laughed, silently and grotesquely. Laughing, he saw himself in the mirror—a wild face, staring like a mask. Where was his calmness? Was he going to fail himself now, at the end? He seized the glass nervously, and as he took the spoon out it dropped clattering on the floor. The noise hurt Bradford's nerves. What—who was this drinking? Frank Bradford? Surely not. Was that Frank Bradford in the mirror there, with a glass in his hand—a glass half-full of cloudy water? He

THE CHAMELEON

shook so that the water trembled; and the water in the mirror trembled too. By God, it *was* he! Laughing silently once more, he ended his hesitation, and put the glass to his lips.

That afternoon, toward half-past four, Amy went up to her room, and sitting down by the window began to think over once more what the rector had said. She had given him her word to believe her husband, and to forgive him; but her resolution left her cold. Her will and her intellect were working, not her emotions. The man she had married was gone, she thought; or, as she had told him, had never existed. The amiable, gently smiling, tired-looking, politely untruthful gentleman called Frank Bradford was what he had always been. Whether he loved her or whether he did not, there was really no way of knowing, and the question was not material. Amy Bradford would not have ceased to care for a man because he ceased to care for her, any more than she would have begun to love him because he loved her. She was steadfast. If Bradford had been the man she thought him he might have beaten her or abandoned her or been unfaithful to her, in the old

THE ROAD OUT

phrase, and she would have gone right on loving him. But—he was not that man; never had been.

She took a little package, tied with a ribbon, from her jewel-case and opened it. Here were the photographs of her dead Boy. She laid them one by one, without looking at them, against her lips. She did not need to look at them, she knew them so well. Her eyes were set upon the lawn, where the sun dripped melted gold among the trees, but she saw nothing there. The wind among the grass variegated it in light and shade, but Amy knew it not. For her the soul was gone from sun and wind and trees. One by one she laid the pictures back, all but the last, the picture of the baby laughing. She lifted it to her face, but she did not kiss it, only laid it hungrily and tenderly against her breast. O baby mine!

A noise reached her ears from her husband's room adjoining. Her husband had not yet come home, she thought, and no one else had any business there at this hour. She opened the door, the picture in her hand. The letters lay upon the desk, in full view, with the open box of powders beside them. Her husband, with a glass of cloudy

THE CHAMELEON

water at his lips, stared at her over the rim. In his eyes she saw sorrow and weariness and fear, which changed as hers met them. She rushed to him, and snatching the glass, hurled it wildly into the grate, where it crashed in broken splinters. Did he care so much as this, so much as this? She hardly knew either how or why, but her arms were round his neck, her face on his shoulder, and the same shudder shook them both. "Oh, Frank, Frank!" The baby's picture dropped from her hand, unheeded, and fluttered to the floor. Bradford was afraid to kiss her, but he stood and held her in his arms, and saw the road to life stretching up from the gates of death he had been about to enter.

There we had better leave them.

THE END

By Booth Tarkington

THE TWO VANREVELS



BOOOTH TARKINGTON'S new novel, *The Two Vanrevels*, is a love story of Indiana, laid in the time of the Mexican War. No setting for a book of Mr. Tarkington's could be more auspicious. It is a story of Indiana by the author of *The Gentleman from Indiana*, and a romance of our forefathers' times by the author of *Monsieur Beaucaire*. It is as stirring and wholesome as the former, and as deft in execution, as witty, as true to the aspect and spirit of the life it re-creates as the latter. The author is more fertile in invention than ever before, and the charm of his style is enhanced by the picture of the happy life of those old days—the days that lay between the passing of the Indian and the coming of the railroads.

Seven dainty illustrations in color by Henry Hutt help to make an unusually handsome book.

80th Thousand

\$1.50

McClure, Phillips & Co.

By Stewart Edward White

THE BLAZED TRAIL

A STORY OF LOVE AND WAR IN THE GREAT
PINE WOODS



IN Thorpe, the Landlooker, and his "Fighting Forty" of lumberjacks, Mr. White has given to literature the most virile and picturesque types of the pioneer since the early work of Bret Harte. The fierce warfare of the rival lumber camps is tempered by an idyllic love-story. In this book the Chicago *Inter Ocean* finds "both the promise and the proof that in time we shall have a fiction purely and distinctively American."

In its Tenth Edition

Illustrated

\$1.50

McClure, Phillips & Co.

By Joel Chandler Harris

GABRIEL TOLLIVER



THIS is by far the most mature and important work that Mr. Harris has yet given us. Like *David Copperfield*, *Gabriel Tolliver* is intensely personal, and is practically the story of Mr. Harris' own boyhood experiences. In so far as its setting is concerned it is a novel of Reconstruction in the South. It is the most perfect picture in fiction of those disheartening days following the war, when the Southern States seemed likely to sink into anarchy through the corruption of the carpet-baggers. In the midst of such conditions, and the quaint, unprogressive life of the little Georgia community, Shady Dale, a beautiful study of boy and girl love is developed and carried to a happy conclusion after exciting adventures on the part of the hero, who is falsely accused of the murder of a Government agent engaged in inciting the negro population to violence against the whites.

\$1.50

McClure, Phillips & Co.

By Arthur Morrison

THE HOLE IN THE WALL



THE HOLE IN THE WALL is the name of a public house in Wapping, a low river-front locality in London. This is the scene of a story, the characters of which are drawn from the denizens of the Ratcliffe Highway in the slums of London. It is a story of grim realism, in the vein which is already familiar to those who are acquainted with Mr. Morrison's *Tales of Mean Streets*. But although grim, its darkness is not unrelieved. Grandfather Nat, the proprietor of "The Hole in the Wall," is a creation worthy of Dickens at his truest and most sympathetic. His affection for his little grandson Stephen gives a humanizing touch to the old tavern proprietor and receiver of stolen goods, and finally wins him from the evil traditions of his life. The plot is full of exciting incidents and sensational situations, handled with an art that makes one think of no one so much as of Stevenson.

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.50

McClure, Phillips & Co.

By George Madden Martin

EMMY LOU, HER BOOK AND
HEART



EMMY LOU, HER BOOK AND HEART, by George Madden Martin, is the simple relation of Emmy Lou's school days, from the *First Reader* up through the High School. In these stories Mrs. Martin has created the most winsomely lovely little girl in contemporary fiction. Moreover, she has drawn the first faithful and sympathetic picture of American public-school life. Mrs. Martin's wonderful insight into the growth of the child's mind gives these stories all the dramatic coherence and development of a great novel.

In his illustrations Charles L. Hinton has shown the same ability and sympathy with children that Mrs. Martin displays in the narrative.

15th Thousand \$1.50

McClure, Phillips & Co.

By Booth Tarkington

THE GENTLEMAN FROM
INDIANA



ONE of the notable American novels of the last decade. It was this fine, strong, stirring story of Indiana life that made Mr. Tarkington's reputation at a bound.

100th Thousand

Price \$1.50

MONSIEUR BEAUCAIRE



FOR delicacy and grace of style, united to dramatic power and swift movement of the plot, *Beaucaire* stands alone.

The New York *Commercial Advertiser* finds these reasons for its wide success :

“ . . . When you once begin to read it you must go on to the end before you lay it down. It is full of gayety and the joy of life. It is the most brilliant and startling of its kind that we have seen in many a day.”

80th Thousand

Price \$1.25

McClure, Phillips & Co.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 046 297 8

